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MY LIFE IN THE OPEN

*MICHAEL FIELD'S
NEW POEMS - -*

WILD HONEY
FROM VARIOUS THYME

BY
MICHAEL FIELD

Author of
"Underneath the Bough," "Sight and
Song," Etc.

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LONDON : T. FISHER UNWIN



Yours faithfully.
Will H. Ogilvie

MY LIFE IN THE OPEN

BY

WILL H. OGILVIE

AUTHOR OF "RAINBOWS AND WITCHES,"
"FAIR GIRLS AND GREY HORSES,"
ETC.



LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

ADELPHI TERRACE

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

AN introduction to a book by a living writer is usually either an ineptitude or an impertinence. It cannot be pleaded that these lines are exempt from the double charge, and I invite those who are acquainted with Mr Will H. Ogilvie's work to leave them unread and pass on to the book itself. They will find there matter more worthy of their attention. But having on more than one occasion expressed my admiration for Mr Ogilvie's work, and having been asked to write an introductory note to this book, I proceed to set down a few facts about Mr Ogilvie's career which some people may care to know, and a few remarks about what he has done in the way of writing which may possibly induce others to turn to his earlier books for themselves.

It is a grave though inevitable consequence of the present over-production of printed matter, when it is almost a distinction not to have one's name upon the title-page, and when the few good books run a greater risk than at any other time in the world's

history of being swamped by the torrent of the bad, that a writer whose books are read and talked of in the back blocks of Australia, in the farms of California, and in the lumber camps of Canada, should yet remain comparatively unknown in this country. This has hitherto been Mr Ogilvie's fate. Recognition, indeed, he has received, but no such recognition as his genius—it is a big word, but no lesser will serve—entitles him to, or as men with a tithe of his claims enjoy. His three volumes of verse, *Fair Girls and Grey Horses*, *Hearts of Gold*, and *Rainbows and Witches*—the last of which has been issued in this country by Mr Elkin Mathews—have had a circulation in the Colonies which would make most contemporary poets and their publishers rub their eyes.

Mr Ogilvie belongs to the intellectual kinship of Stevenson—the Stevenson of *Across the Plains*. A Scot of the Border, he was born near Kelso and received his education at Kelso High School and later at Fettes College in Edinburgh. At the age of twenty he went out to Australia and spent the next eleven years of his life there doing most things and gathering a rich harvest of experience. Riding “buck-jumpers,” overlanding with sheep and cattle, and generally going through the rough apprenticeship of an Australian sheep station is an unusual training

for the career of letters, but there is many a writer who would give much to have had the experience. It taught Mr Ogilvie to see the world as it is, swept the cobwebs of convention and habit out of his brain, if indeed they ever lodged there, and gave him the feeling for Nature's moods and the insight into the characters of her creatures which characterise his work. Like Melampus:—

“For him the woods were a home, and gave him the key
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we
To Earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours.”

For, to quote again from Meredith, “the taking of rain and sun alike befits men of our climate, and he who would have the secret of strengthening intoxication must court the clouds of the south-west with a love's blood.” Mr Ogilvie's life has been an open-air life, not laboriously gathering emotions at second-hand from books, but going out to pursue them with quickening blood and something of a reckless disregard of consequences. One can see this spirit, this feeling of companionship with “the browsers, the biters, the barkers, the hairy coats of field and forest” in the pages of *My Life in the Open*.

To adventure succeeded expression, and Mr Ogilvie

returned to Scotland in 1901 and gave himself up to literature. He worked at journalism with success, but the *wander-lust* was still over him and he went to Iowa three years later to take up a post in the State Agricultural College for which the knowledge of farming he had gained in Australia had well fitted him. Two years ago he came back from America and now lives in Scotland, having resumed his old trade of journalism.

As a poet Mr Ogilvie has pleased the public better than the critics. This is quite unorthodox. The poet should, so some people think, at first find an audience fit, though few, and then gradually win his way to the admiration of the multitude. But Mr Ogilvie's public, though not "few," is undoubtedly "fit." It is a public of men who have been in tight places and are able to recognise the feeling, of boundary-riders and back-blockers, of men unspoiled by culture who spend their lives in the open air, who feel the thrill of primitive things, those rude elemental forces and passions to which Mr Ogilvie goes for his inspiration. Lest anybody should be led into the belief that Mr Ogilvie is an inferior artist I quote the poem, "A Dreamer of Dreams," exquisite in its feeling and masterly in its command of technique.

“The song-thrush loves the laurel,
The stone-chat haunts the broom,
But the sea-gull must have room
Where the white drift spins ashore,
And the winds and waters quarrel,
With the old hate evermore.

You clear with scythe or sabre
A pathway for your feet,
I move in meadow sweet
By the side of silent streams,
And you are lord of labour
And I am serf of dreams.

You fill the red wine flagon
And drink and ride away,
To the toil of each new day;
But I quaff till dawn be pale,
To the knight, or dame, or dragon
Of a dream-spun fairy-tale.

You win your chosen maiden,
With a bracelet for her wrist,
Lightly courted, lightly kissed,
She is yours for weal or woe,
But my heart goes sorrow-laden,
For a dream-love long ago.

Let our pathways part for ever,
I am all content with mine—
For when lips are tired of wine
As the long dead dreamers tell
There are poppies by the river,
There is hemlock in the dell.”

Writing several years ago Walter Bagshot put his finger on the great want in contemporary literature. "The reason why so few good books are written," he says, "is that few people that can write know anything. In general an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiment of the best authors, but is out of the way of employing his own ears and eyes. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum. . . . He sits beside a library fire, with nice white paper, a good pen, a capital style, every means of saying everything, and nothing to say." Not the least of Mr Ogilvie's merits is that he is one of the few who have escaped the curse. He has been in touch with the raw elements of life; the peril of sudden death has faced him; the exultation of conquest has stirred his blood. His, too, is that quiet and long-continued communion with Nature, both living and inanimated which invests with so singular an interest every member of what he calls in this book "the noblest profession in the world," the men who go out to their toil and their labour until the evening, digging into the fruitful bosom of good old Mother Earth.

A. W. E.

IN THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH

MY LIFE IN THE OPEN

THE GLAMOUR OF THE BUSH

“ The loves of earth grow olden
Or kneel at some new shrine ;
Her locks are always golden—
This brave Bush-love of mine ;
And for her starlit beauty,
And for her dawns dew-pearled,
Her name in love and duty
I guard against the world ! ”

The Bush, my Love.

NORTH of Goulburn, west of Bathurst, east of Kalgoorlie, bounded only by sea and sky, stretches the great reach of hill and plain that men call the Bush; rolling sandhills, with miles and miles of twisted mulga, stony ranges, gum flats, brigalow plains, open grassy river frontage, cane grass swamps and blue grass pastures—this is the Australian Bush, and, dusty, fierce, relentless in the summer, flood-ridden, cold and cheerless as often in the winter days, she winds a glamour about our hearts that is peculiar to herself—a charm that,

travel as he may in the most beautiful spots of the world, no bushman ever forgets or wishes to forget.

It is sunset on the Coorong, the ribbon of blue water that divides the ninety-mile desert from the sea on the coast of South Australia below Adelaide. Behind the low sandhills the sun is going down in a regal crimson splendour; the water takes a peculiar greenish purple tint beside us, fading away into crimson and gold between the brown of the sand hummocks and the dark green of the mallee scrub on the desert side.

Great flocks of wild-fowl sweep and settle again, with strange, discordant cries, and the white beach gleams with a ghastly pallor that will heighten under the summer moon. It is all ghostly and strange and unreal, with a weird—almost repellent—witchery, and yet, once seen it is never forgotten; and so it is that over here in Scotland, among the most beautiful scenery in the world, one would give a king's ransom to hear the sudden whistle of the black duck's wing and the little whisper of the wave upon the sand.

It is early morning on the plains below the Queensland border, after the warm, semi-tropical night. In the east there is a ruby flush in the sky, every

moment widening with the day; the long barley grass dripping with dew brushes boot and stirrup, and the scent of the eucalyptus steals to the very heart. The quaint, twisted stems of the gum trees look even quainter, more bizarre than ever in the dim light, and there is no beauty, as the Englishman's eye is trained to beauty, but only this strange, weird, bewitching charm that is hard to realise or express. Suddenly from the vine trees a burst of warbling melody—the magpies calling to the dawn—and round and round your horse's feet flutters the black wagtail, the "shepherd's companion" of the Bush, flying on ahead, then waiting or fluttering back, as though to lead you on to the unexplored beauties of the plains. A sweep to the right and your horse's feet are muffled in the soft, red sand as you ride up through the ridge; on either side the vines and supplejacks trail green branches to the ground; here and there a quandong or a native cherry stands like a trim bush in the grounds of some country house. Higher still and we are among the pines; here and there a dripping branch touches cheek or hand with the cool touch of a woman on a fevered brow, and thrills us with that magic of the Bush. From bough to bough the spiders have spun their silken threads, making broad targets on which

the rising sun makes many an inner white and gold with his swift arrows. On the ridge-top you rein your horse and look back over the green plain to the river; far away among the timber gleam the silver homestead roofs; through the lignum bushes under the sandhill the horses are feeding out into the swamp, snatching up the three-foot barley grass in great mouthfuls, and ringing merry peals from the horse-bells as they go.

You move your horse from the pine trees out into the open space on the crown of the hill, then, clear of the trees, let the heavy stock-whip fall; fourteen feet from keeper to cracker it lies out along the sand, and the roar of it fills the air and dies away along the ridges to the north like a muttered thunder in the hills.

Down on the plain there is a scramble among the horses; tossing manes and sweeping tails, they rush up together. From every side they gather, trotting, galloping in, bays, browns and chestnuts, a grey, a creamy, and another grey; then, as if swung by one impulse, they lower their heads and gallop down the track to the stockyard in a cloud of dust, plunging, bucking as they go, and chasing one another in wanton play. Your own horse bites on the bit, and then, rearing straight up, makes

a plunging buck forward, and taking rein from your willing hand, is down through the bushes like a flash of light, shaking the cold drops from the pine trees as he passes, and every now and again throwing his lean head to his knee, asking mutely for leave to overtake the flying mob. And there is no real beauty about the horse paddock in the early morning, only a strange fascination that appeals to horse and man, and makes a man restless when he is away from it—the weird, unaccountable witchery of the Bush.

It is night upon Macquarie—a clear, starry and moonlight night. The footsore cattle are camped on the rising ground by the river, and in the weird stillness you are keeping the midnight watch. In the scrub a night-owl chants his melancholy note, “Mopoke! Mopoke! Mopoke!” then there is silence, a heavy silence that is weird in the extreme.

It is these long night-watches in the dead silence that turn a man in on himself as it were, on himself and the Bush, himself and the Bush, these two only, until the Bush seems to become wedded to his heart, and his heart to the Bush, till the Bush at night, with its weird cries and its still more weird hush, becomes an actual part of himself.

Another log upon the fire! And away up the

river a curlew calls querulously; a pitiful, wailing cry is the curlew's, voicing all that is lone and lost and hopeless in the world, and many a watcher in the still Australian night has heard the echo of that wailing cry in his own heart. But grim, lonely and oppressing at times as the Bush night is, it still has that peculiar witchery of its own that will never be in the gladdest nights of nightingale and guitar; that spell that brings the drover and the traveller back again and again to worship at the shrine of its silent beauty; that charm that chains the true bushman to his love though half the world lies between.

TWO FOES OF THE SETTLER

“With brown hand to the bridle,
And scarred hand to the axe,
They chase their dim gold idol
Along the blazed Bush tracks.
Ah ! lone the life they follow,
And rough the roads they ride—
The right men, the white men,
The men of Sunset Side !”

Sunset Side.

AUSTRALIA is admittedly one of the greatest pastoral countries of the known world. By far the largest part of this immense continent is suited to the grazing of sheep and cattle, and our colonial cousins have never failed to make the best possible use of it in that connection. Besides supplying her own vast and growing population with the beef, mutton and wool which it yearly requires, Australia speeds from her shores each season a veritable fleet of wool-ships to the markets of the outside world, while Australian mutton and Australian butter are favourably known in the cities of Western Europe.

With its warm, growthy climate, temperate winter

seasons and marvellous recuperative powers, together with its unparalleled supply of nourishing native grass, it would, but for one or two drawbacks, be a veritable graziers' paradise.

But Australia, like other less-favoured lands, has her pastoral problems to deal with, and two, at least, of these are insistent in their demand for immediate attention if her present success is to continue and her future prosperity to be assured; these problems are drought and rabbits. Against these two powerful scourges and the intermittent attacks of lesser enemies, such as floods, grasshoppers, fires and wild dogs, the Australian settler has for long been waging an unequal warfare—unequal because his weapons have been inadequate to cope with the well-ordered invasion of these formidable foes.

Upon the sheep-farmer of the Great Central West has fallen the heaviest burden of assault. The agriculturist of the more settled portions of the South and East has found the smallness of his holding, and its proximity to the snow-fed and thus more regular rivers, an additional security and bulwark of defence. The cattle-owner of the far-out, fenceless regions of Northern and Eastern Queensland has, in the more dependable coastal

rainfall and in the very vastness and variety of his territory, found some safety and immunity. But the squatter of Riverina and the homestead lessee of the Bogan and Lachlan Rivers have tasted too often the anxiety of harassing attack and the bitterness of constant defeat.

As regards drought—the foremost enemy of this most magnificent pastoral country—he has taken toll of its increase for so many years that his aggressive march is a regularly looked-for evil, an inevitable injustice of the stronger against the weaker which, in spite of all determination in those who struggle so gallantly against it, seems a doom to be suffered from time to time. Against this silent, relentless and cruel enemy the battle has been long and well-nigh hopeless; the Western men, though grimly fighting still—as they will fight on to the end for their fortunes and their firesides and their families—have acquired in their attitude towards drought something of a pathetic resignation; riding year after year along their broken battle-line with little or no display of temper, with seldom a fretful complaint, with no worse than a suspicion of sadness in the firm-set, sun-browned faces, they look on grimly while Death, the destroyer, stalks through their barren acres, taking all but the strongest,

and marking his way with the bleaching bones of a million dead.

For months at a time the sun shines remorselessly from a sky like beaten copper; sometimes the clouds come sweeping up at nightfall, flattering only to deceive—for no rain seems able to fall from them. The grass grows brown and dry, shrivels in the furnace breath of the hot winds, and disappears; the grim, red, tortured earth burns like fired iron through the leather-shod foot of man and the horn-protected hoof of the horse, crumbles into a dusty powder, and is blown aside by every breeze.

The rivers run slower and slower, become a mere chain of stagnant waterholes, and finally dry away altogether, leaving a ghastly fence of prisoned corpses set in the hardened slime. Even the deep pools and artificial tanks give but small resistance to the strangling foe, and their banks resound with the pitiful clamour of the bleating flocks and lowing herds that come to them in vain.

The air is full of the stench of decaying carcasses, and vibrates with waves of impending calamity. Wild things of the woods become tame in this common adversity; gaunt emus stalk fearlessly up to the very verandahs of the houses; kangaroos, mere

shadows of their former selves, stand like tawny ghosts on the bank of the fast-drying waterhole; wild horses, usually too shy to come to water till the dark has fallen and the moon is up, come now in the glare of the red noon, snorting and apprehensive still—bold against their better judgment.

Day after day the flocks grow pitifully less as the grim enemy closes with them, leaving his victims dead on every side.

The settler, powerless to render assistance, rides each grim morning through the rotting ranks, counting his losses and waiting, waiting for the raising of the siege.

Yet the bushman prepares, to the best of his ability, for these incursions of the drought, whose power and determination he has learnt to appreciate at their true value. He is not without resource. He knows, as well as any fireside theorist can tell him, that water must be conserved to meet these periodical attacks, and that there is no bulwark against the dreaded foe's advance except such as is presented by well-filled tank or well-dammed creek, and this barrier it has been his constant endeavour to supply.

At various points upon the larger rivers may be found huge earthworks of dams, erected at vast

expense to ensure at least one permanent and reliable supply of water upon each large holding. Every river-arm has its small dam, every natural hollow is deepened and banked to hold water; and yet this fierce, relentless enemy overrides and makes useless them all.

If this system is to be Australia's last line-formation against the battalions of drought, then assuredly are her ramparts doomed, for four years of severe drought will find the bottom of the deepest of these Western reservoirs, when—as would be the case—it had become the sole reliance of the settler, horse and herd.

The finding of artesian water came as a blessing to the squatter of these Western plains, at his wits' end for some means of coping with the prolonged periods of dry weather to which he was becoming accustomed but by no means reconciled. The heavy cost, however, of sinking these wells is in many cases prohibitive, and though the ultimate advantages undoubtedly compensate for the outlay, capital is not always to be found available for the initiation of the work. Artesian water, where it has been found in satisfactory quantities, has turned the semi-arid desert of the Central West into a veritable garden. It is a beautiful sight, when all the surrounding

country is a waste of barren and driven dust, to see one of these wonderful internal reservoirs of the earth tossing up through a five-inch pipe a great volume of crystal water, at the rate of perhaps a million gallons in twenty-four hours. Night and day this level flow never ceases, and there appears to be so far no sign of exhaustion in the supply of any of the large bores as yet put down, which favours the frequently-advanced theory that this water is released from some mighty underground river.

From these facts it might be assumed that the future salvation of the arid tracts of Central Australia will depend upon irrigation. "You have the rivers," says the armchair Empire theorist; "all that you require is to cut channels for the water and your desert land will blossom into life. Look at the United States—the Central West—Colorado, Nebraska, Utah! Look what *they* have done! There's energy for you! There's irrigation for you!"

But the Western bushman knows his country better than any stranger can know it, and a grim smile plays about his firm brown mouth. He knows his low-lying rivers and their utter inadaptability to irrigation. He knows them all too well—a chain of muddy waterholes in summer, a tawny torrent in

winter flood, with arms that stretch for twenty miles across the plains! What engineer could cope with such natural disadvantages or build channels to withstand the stress of such abnormal conditions?

The Australian settler cannot, by his most bitter enemy, be truthfully accused of want of energy or want of pluck, but a four-year drought is a stupendous opponent, and makes heavy drains not only on energy but on wealth and health, on brains and resource, and though the Australian has as much of these as his British cousin he has no more, and the situation remains a hard one, with the balance of power in the hands of drought, the relentless.

It seems that the settler in these afflicted districts must work out his own salvation on terms most suited to local requirements. No mortal power can prevent the destruction of grass in a drought and the consequent privations which the flocks must suffer; but two things *can* be done—the country can be lightly stocked when a drought by all ordinary signs seems imminent, and water can be obtained by the sinking of artesian wells. The expense of the latter—the great outlay necessary—is the only possible argument against them, and any objection to go to what must be counted reasonable expense in provid-

ing a suitable bulwark to the drought's inevitable attack shows a mistaken economy which has invariably spelt disaster to those who have practised it. On the other hand, those men who have lavishly and, apparently, recklessly spent money in making such provision have never failed to reap their advantage later on in the phenomenally high prices which they always obtain for saved stock at the end of a prolonged drought.

Australia's next most important and pressing problem is undoubtedly the destruction of the rabbits which have overrun her rich feeding-grounds and clogged the wheels of her pastoral progress during many recent years. It was an English sportsman who, in a misguided moment, introduced a pair of rabbits into the Colony of Victoria, in the hope that their progeny might afford sport upon his estate. From a distributive and cumulative point of view his experiment was entirely successful, and if we can hardly say that the descendants of the prolific pair afford *sport* to the Australian of to-day, they afford, at anyrate, material for a good deal of hard thinking.

Spreading rapidly over Victoria, the rabbits crossed the border into New South Wales and into South Australia, where the mallee and sand of the

Ninety-Mile Desert afforded them a soft surface for their burrows and plentiful cover from their enemies. Northward up the Coorong they swarmed in their tens of thousands, spreading out into the saltbush country that surrounds the world-famous silver mines of Broken Hill. Further east their uninterrupted march took them to the very borders of Queensland. The settlers of that colony, profiting by the experience of their southern neighbours, determined to stop the oncoming multitude at any cost. Consequently they built a rabbit-proof fence along their border, four foot of mesh and wire, and awaited results. For a while the tide was stemmed, and the baffled army seethed backwards and forwards along the netting barrier, eating up every green thing upon the New South Wales side; but somehow—no one is prepared to say how—a few stragglers got through or over the fence, and the Queensland lines were stormed.

Some say that young rabbits crept through the netting mesh, others that they climbed over, still others that unscrupulous bushmen put a few over, tempted by the high rates then given for rabbit scalps in the sparsely-affected districts. However it may be, the fence was crossed.

Meanwhile the more seriously-afflicted colonies

were not idly suffering the invasion. Holdings were netted at great expense, poison carts were bought and poisoned pollard was laid in large quantities, gangs of men were paid to shoot and trap and hunt with dogs, and wire and pit traps were set along the netted fences. Tens of thousands of rabbits were destroyed, but hundreds of thousands took their places in the fighting line. They became a greater scourge than the floods, a fiercer menace than the drought. As their numbers increased, and the hopelessness of dealing with this new plague made itself apparent to some of the landholders, they ceased their efforts and the brown squadrons looted and pillaged at will. They nibbled pasture and crop, and fouled the sheep-runs until even the kangaroos went wide for cleaner grass. Even the pluckier and more determined settlers were obliged to give up the fight, as they found their land repopulated by the rabbits of their neighbours. Only those who could afford to put a ring fence of small meshed netting around their entire property had any chance of prolonging the unequal fight. Even with these it was a ceaseless battle, in which the squatter only kept the upper hand by a diligence and vigilance which were scarcely relaxed by day or night.

Up to the present time that constant war is being waged over a wide district with a varying measure of success. On some holdings the rabbits are practically held in check. In others they ride steel-shod over the pastures, conquerors looting at will.

Many schemes have been put forward to compass their destruction, but without avail. Drought, the deadly enemy of the squatter, is also the rabbit's fiercest and most successful foe. But the rabbit outstays the longest drought; and as soon as the rain falls his battered legions take heart of grace and multiply and replenish the earth.

A year or two ago a man named Rodier came forward with a theory of rabbit destruction which aroused considerable attention and promoted endless discussion. His plan was that all bucks caught in wire and pit traps should be set free again, but all does caught should be destroyed, and he claimed that by this method it would be found that the number of bucks would be so large in proportion to that of females that the former would fight with one another until they were decimated and practically destroyed.

Many settlers tried the plan, only to find it too slow, and they gave it up as impracticable.

Rodier, however, fenced in his property and persevered, and to-day claims that not a single rabbit can be found upon his holding.

So terrible a scourge has this rabbit invasion become to Australia that the Government has from time to time been importuned to intervene; without success, however, until quite recently.

For some little time the authorities of New South Wales have been in communication with Dr Danysz, a well-known European scientist, who has offered to make an attempt to destroy the rabbits by introducing a virus among them. Negotiations have been practically concluded; £5000 has been collected by public subscription to cover the cost of certain preliminary experiments, and Dr Danysz is now in Sydney, carrying out some final laboratory trials before making his initial attempt upon a small rabbit-infested island, to which it has been deemed advisable to confine his maiden efforts in case of any accident in the way of wholesale infection of stock, though the doctor avers that such would be impossible in connection with the virus which he will use. However his experiments may turn out, everyone who has the future prosperity of pastoral Australia at heart will wish

the enterprising scientist the success he assuredly deserves.*

There are, as we have hinted above, other lesser scourges which oppress the Australian settler, but it is the rabbits and the drought which supply this great country with her two most difficult problems.

* Since the above lines were written the Danysz experiments have been abandoned.

SHEEP BY THE HUNDRED THOUSAND

“ A soft wind blew from north by west
And raised a little grit,
The Johnnie flicked his spotless vest
And turned aside to spit ;
He chased his straw hat up a tree,
Then wiped the brim and cussed,
And asked me, ‘ Did you *evah* see
So *demnable* a dust ?’
I told him that I thought I had
Seen, once or twice, the dust as bad.

Dust.

THOUGH the large tracts of country in inland Australia, once owned by individuals, have of late years been divided into smaller holdings more suitable to men of moderate means, there still remain in some parts of New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland—particularly in the latter colony—some very large sheep stations in the possession of wealthy individuals or companies.

In the early colonial days the pioneers went inward from the coast settlements, daring the dangers of the unknown Bush, in order to have the privilege of making a home among the rich pasture lands of the interior. Reaching a river or lake, or such water

as seemed to them to promise permanency in the seasons of summer's worst assault, these Abrahams of the untrodden plains took the saddles from their jaded horses and the bows from their sore-necked bullocks, and turned out the weary beasts to rest and fatten in this land of promise, in these fenceless pastures of their choice. Later on these hardy pioneers returned upon their tracks to bring, at very considerable risk from flood and drought and hostile natives, the two or three hundred sheep which were to form the nucleus of the immense flocks which should afterwards whiten the ranges and valleys of their chosen territory—a territory to which the only title-deeds they held were the axe-scars on their rugged hands and the care-lines on their sun-burned brows. Such were the “squatters” of those early days; and still the descendants of these indomitable conquerors of the wild are to be found holding heritage of the patriarchal flocks and now numbering their sheep by hundreds of thousands.

Nearly all of the large stations are now fenced; the lonely shepherds yarding their flocks with every falling of the night are a thing of the past, and the seemingly endless lines of post and wire, running shimmering into the sunset or losing themselves in the

dancing mirages of noon, are everywhere a sight familiar.

The land covered by some of these immense holdings is almost incredible in extent, and can only be compared to the acreage of the huge cattle ranches in Texas and Mexico. Tyson, the Queensland cattle-king, who died a few years ago, a millionaire in lands and money, owned among others a single station named Tinenburra on the borders of New South Wales and Queensland, which at the time of his death was being rapidly converted from a cattle to a sheep-run. The holding extended from the Border fence to the town of Cunnamulla, a distance of ninety miles, with a breadth in places of thirty and forty miles. There are two stations in the same vicinity owned by a wealthy pastoral company and under the direction of a single manager; and the latter can drive a hundred miles in a straight line without leaving the territory under his charge.

This is all fenced country, but the paddocks are, of course, of exceptional extent. The writer has been in one "field" which was a square of fifteen miles on every fence, and has frequently mustered sheep in another in which each of the fences measured twelve miles, and has ridden round a third

enclosed by a fence which was sixty-four miles long and, being over rocky hills for the most part, took a full day to follow. Of course the flocks of sheep which feed in these enclosures are correspondingly large—30,000 being the largest number the writer has seen in one of these vast paddocks.

In a "good season," when the blue grass is girth high and there is water in every creek and hollow, and the sheep are split up in small lots through the ridges, this number does not seem so unmanageably large; but when King Drought holds court in the arid tracts of his boundless kingdom, when the sheep depend upon the great tanks for water and come stilting in at sunset, ten thousand on ten thousand, to drink greedily, and then go dragging back on weary limbs to the only untrampled grass four or eight or ten miles away at the back of the paddock—then, indeed, the number seems awful in its pathetic immensity. The writer has helped to muster 30,000 shorn wethers from such a paddock as this and to drive them ten miles to the drafting-yards. The dust set whirling by so many thousand can be better imagined than described, and the great flock moved slowly forward through a heavy yellow twilight, with a fence upon one side and the horsemen

and sixteen good sheep-dogs on the other. When the last of the mob went leaping through the gateway of the paddock the leaders were being steadied up to the second gate four miles away.

In this land of ample numbers it is not uncommon to have eight or nine hundred shorn sheep die from cold in a single night, to have twelve or fifteen hundred burned to death in one corner by a Bush fire, or to have 2000 long-tailed lambs break away from the marking-yards and scatter all over a six-mile paddock, causing endless deaths from loss of their mothers. If the profits of raising a hundred thousand are considerable, verily the catastrophes to which they are liable are relatively stupendous.

It is a frequent occurrence to have ten to fourteen thousand sheep in a drafting-yard at one time, and every muster on a large station means the gathering together of at least 5000 sheep.

Immense lots of sheep are travelled from one station to another after a sale, sweeping down the half-mile roads like a swarm of locusts, devouring every green thing—and in drought every grey and yellow thing—which comes in their way. The drovers frequently take mobs of eight and ten thousand for hundreds of miles overland; the

writer has seen 15,000 travelling in one man's charge, and no doubt this number has often been exceeded. Of course in such cases the sheep are not travelled in one flock—although they are under the supreme charge of one man—but are driven in lots of four to five thousand, as a large number could not be handily managed in such a way as to allow them freedom to spread across the country and feed to advantage without being hustled and crowded. Two men with *good* dogs—a great deal depending on the quality of the dogs—will handle 4000 sheep, or even more, as a rule; but there are times, such as when hungry sheep come suddenly upon rich green pastures, when twice the number of men would have difficulty in keeping half the number of sheep together, as in such cases they care nothing for shouting shepherds, cracking whips and barking dogs, but go their own way in blissful unconcern, running from tuft to tuft, nibbling, tugging, and rushing on till the first pangs of hunger are allayed.

The most important part of the sheep-work on the large stations in Australia is, of course, the shearing. This is carried on in a colossal style which accords with the immense number of sheep to be handled. There is no time here for the leisurely clip-clipping of

the European shepherd, nor for the lifting on to wooden benches and tying of legs such as characterises a shearing in the older lands. With one or two, or perhaps three thousand "woollies" awaiting their turn below the shears there is of necessity no time to waste, nor can too much attention be given to the individual, and unless a strict watch is kept by the man in charge of the operations a good deal of rough treatment is dealt out to the poor ewe that is dumb before the shearer. The men are paid by the hundred sheep shorn, and naturally a feverish haste pervades the long, low-roofed shed in which forty, fifty, or even eighty shearers sweat and toil through the warm September days, for every sheep put down the shoot represents a few pence more towards the building of the coveted "cheque."

With the now almost universally-used shearing machines the "tallies" of the present shearers reach alarming proportions, some men shearing as many as 200 or 220 sheep in one day. It may be well imagined that with forty to sixty men shearing even an average of 100 sheep in a day the station men are kept busy mustering and drafting the woolly sheep and taking the shorn sheep back from shed to pasture, and a Western shearing-shed at this time of

the year wears a halo of yellow dust and rings with the ever-ceasing clamour of dogs and sheep and men.

Sheep stations on which were pastured over 100,000 sheep used to be at one time fairly common. But the leased lands of the great squatters are being gradually resumed by the Government and split up into blocks of 2500 acres, with the laudable intention of setting the man of moderate means upon the land. So the great flockmasters of Australia are now few in number; yet there are still some veritable kings of the golden fleece with their flocks that feed upon a thousand hills; men of wealth and substance, headed by Samuel M'Caughey of Coonong (and half a dozen other fine properties), whose sheep number half a million, while the wages of his station hands and shearing must amount to the proverbial king's ransom.

The immense Burrawong Station, near Forbes, on the Lachlan River, belonging to the Edols family, much curtailed as it has been of recent years by the loss of the larger part of its leasehold area, still puts through its magnificent shed of eighty shearers some 200,000 sheep, and there are several other stations as large. On these extensive properties a rise of one penny a pound on the wool clip means a gift to the

owners of several thousand pounds sterling. Shearing is the only heavy expense, for during the greater part of the year a mere handful of men is sufficient to handle and care for these majestic battalions of the "Golden Hoof."

THE SHEARING OF THE SHEEP

“ The western creeks are calling
And the idle days are done,
With the snowy fleeces falling
And the Queensland sheds begun ! ”

Northward to the Sheds.

ON an Australian sheep station by far the most important work is the shearing of the flock, which takes place at any time between May and December, according to the district and the local climate, while the minor considerations of flood or drought or falling grass seed are factors in determining the actual date at which operations begin. On a big sheep station everything dates from shearing-time. “ It was just before last shearing,” they say, or “ I will attend to it after shearing,” or “ So-and-so was here two shearings ago.”

Through the greater part of the year a large station of 50,000 to 80,000 sheep is worked by a staff of ten to fifteen men; but at shearing-time the shed and surrounding buildings contain from fifty to a hundred men, with here and there a white tent starring the plain, and the stir and hum of the work turn this

quiet corner into the semblance of a thriving settlement.

A week or more before the date fixed for starting work the shearers begin to arrive, jogging up on their leg-weary horses with a led horse carrying their blankets and a change of clothes.

The Australian shearer is a notable type of the independent skilled worker; skilled to the extent of his art, independent to a fault; for the most part tall and lithe and loose-limbed, sitting his rough-haired Bush colt with the easy abandon of a born horseman. His face is wrinkled with the "sun-frown of the Bush"—from gazing with drawn brows over dazzling sun-glare; he is burnt brick-red on hand and wrist and neck by the fierce sun of many shearing seasons.

The shearer invariably rides—the rouseabout, for the most part, walks. The "rouseabout" is the unskilled labourer, the assistant and concomitant of the shearer, who gathers up the fleeces, winds and ties them, sweeps the floor, yards the sheep, tars the wounds, and helps in the yards to draft and tar-brand. The shearer despises the rouseabout, and the rouseabout affects to despise the shearer, but inwardly admires and envies him, and in due course, when opportunity offers, takes the first chance of

learning to shear and so gaining in caste and prestige. The shearers are in many cases the sons of farmers, who make use of this employment to add to an income rendered uncertain by limited rain-fall and unlimited rabbits, and the thousand pests and perils that form the drawbacks to a farmer's life in every clime and continent. But others are men who make a living by shearing alone, men who travel from shed to shed, going south as the shearing goes, so that beginning at the Queensland Border in May or June they may shear through six or eight sheds and finish in Victoria or South Australia. With the money thus earned they will have sufficient to keep themselves well and decently until the shearing season begins again; and in this way they live from year to year, independent of labour in any other field.

Then there are still others who work fiercely and hard for two or three months in the bigger sheds, only to leave them and spend their hard-earned pounds in heavy drinking and riotous living in the hells of the Bush-track and township; later on they are compelled to take what work they can get to keep them through the summer.

Weeks, and in some cases months, before shearing the shearer writes and applies for a "pen" or "stand" at an early shed. Supposing him to be a good

shearer and to be known by the station manager to whom he applies, his name will be put down and he will be notified to that effect. Some days before the date on which the work is to begin he runs in his horses, loads up his household gods, and with a cheery farewell to his girl rides away upon the Northern Track. The shearers usually travel in little bands of three or four, riding thirty or forty miles in the day and camping by the river at night, with a roaring fire of myall logs before them and the tinkle of their horse-bells in the bend below. Very merry they are as a rule, and light of heart, for the beginning of shearing is the beginning of hard work certainly, but it is at the same time the beginning of comradeship and friendly rivalry, of money-making, and, for some, of better food and shelter than has been their lot for the last few months. So the shearers ride north on fat horses with laughter and jest; and away out on the big station the manager and his men muster the sheep. As the day for starting draws near the shearers ride up by twos and threes, and the rouseabouts and shed-hands come in from all quarters on foot, carrying their "swags," *i.e.*, blankets strapped in bundles across their shoulders. The cook with his assistant is installed in the shearers' hut, and the station men are kept

busy carting wood and water, preparing the long shearing-shed for its weeks of work.

An Australian shearing-shed is used for only two or at most three months of the year, sometimes only for three or four weeks, yet it is nearly always a substantial, sometimes indeed a costly, building. Built of stout slabs and uprights and roofed with galvanised iron, it consists of a raised floor called "the board," on which the shearers shear the sheep. In a "centre-board" shed the pens containing the sheep are round the outside of this board; in a "double board" shed the pens are in the middle and the shearing space runs down each side. In each case the shorn sheep are put down "shoots," which convey them more or less roughly, according to the temper of the shearer, to the little pens outside in the yards, from which they are counted by the overseer and credited to the owner of the pen. There is a catching-pen to each two shearers, and this is filled as required from a race in which the sheep enter the shed from the drafting-yards. Most of the best and biggest sheds in Australia are now fitted with machinery, but in many are still to be found the old-fashioned shears, or "tongs" as they are familiarly called by those who use them most.

The engine which supplies the motive power stands

in a building of its own at one end of the shed, and a belt connects it with the shafting, which is set along the top of the board and puts in motion each individual machine. From this shafting is worked the actual clipper—practically the same as an ordinary horse-clipper—in the shearer's hand, and each separate machine may be put in or out of gear in a second by the mere pulling of a string. Thus each shearer works independently of his neighbours, and as he finishes a sheep pulls his string and puts his machine out of gear until the next sheep is caught and placed, when he gives the string another jerk, the metal cutter hums upon the comb, and without delay the machine races smoothly along under the creaming wool.

On the day of starting the "roll" is called, and all the shearers who are present answer to their names. For those who have not reported their pens are kept for a day or two in case some unforeseen array of circumstances has prevented their arrival. If they do not put in an appearance by that time their places are given to some of those who have come to the shed on the chance of getting one of the unclaimed stands. The shed is filled from the sheep-yard, and the little catching-pens from the shed-race, and all is in readiness for a start. At a given signal—a whistle

from the engine in a machine-shed, the ring of a bell where shears are used—each shearer steps into his catching-pen and seizes a sheep, which he carries out on the board and sets in position; then one after another the machines are put in motion and the long silent shed leaps suddenly into whirring, humming life, while the musical click-click of the shears in a hand-shed is no less inspiriting. The big brown-faced shearers call to one another with cheery rough badinage as the white fleeces flow over their hands. The “pickers-up,” young men and boys who pick up the fleeces and keep the board clear with their brooms, rush up and down to keep pace with the swiftly-working shearers, who send sheep after sheep down the shoots with startling rapidity.

At the end of the shed and under the same roof is a large wool-room. Here are placed the wool-tables and the bins in which the different sorts of wool are stacked. The pickers-up rush along with the fleeces to the wool-tables, on which they fling them with a quick toss which spreads them full and free across the barred table-top. In front of the tables stand the “wool-rollers,” men whose business is to “skirt” the fleeces, that is to say, to pull away the rough edges or any stained or seed-infested part, and then to roll the fleece into a bundle and tie it up in itself so to

speak. The fleeces thus tied are taken to the wool-classer's table, and he—an expert paid at the rate of a pound for a thousand fleeces—classes them with incredible swiftness and tosses them into their proper bins, from which they are carried by the wool-pressers to the big press and filled into bales which, when pressed down, stand about five feet high and are about three feet in thickness, and weigh from three and a half to five hundredweight according to the sort of wool. The pieces which are plucked off the fleece by the wool-rollers are stacked by themselves and pressed separately, as also are the belly-wool and the “locks” or sweepings which fall through the bars of the wool-tables or are collected from the boards or pens. The bales when pressed are branded with the name of the class of wool, the name of the station, initials of the owner and weight of bale, and are then stacked in the wool-room to await team or camel, which shall convey them to the railway line and so to ship and market.

For all the work connected with the wool-room the expert wool-classer is held responsible; and the shearing-board is supervised by an overseer, commonly known as the Boss of the Board, whose duties are to keep the shearers in check, to see that the sheep are properly shorn, and to act generally as a middle

man between shearers and owner, while protecting the interests of the latter—a position which requires much tact and firmness and is not particularly sought after by the peace-loving gentleman who can find other employment.

The great cause of friction between shearer and sheep-owner is the wet sheep question, which is renewed with vigour as every shearing season comes round and seems no nearer a reasonable settlement than it was twenty years ago, in spite of much writing and argument and several conferences between squatters and shearers' representatives. Yet the matter seems simple: the shearer does not want to shear wet sheep and the owner does not want to press wet wool; then why the trouble? It is a matter of common knowledge that nothing is more dangerous to health than the holding of a steaming wet or half-dried sheep against one's body, and no man of sense would wish or expect any shearer to run a risk of this sort. But the shearers are apt in many cases to abuse the privilege of knocking off work for a time which this excuse gives them, and time and again the cry of "wet sheep" has been raised when the reason was plain to the unprejudiced—perhaps a cricket match or a horse race in the neighbouring township having claimed the attention of the shearer.

The slightest shower—not enough to wet a handkerchief—is made a pretext for stopping work for the day. This suits the shearer very well, for he is paid by the hundred sheep shorn and may be glad of a rest, but it may be guessed how inconvenient a delay at such a time is to the squatter who is paying a large staff of shed-hands, whose employment of course ceases when the shearer lays aside his shears.

Shearing goes on for eight or nine hours a day, with intervals for meals and shorter intervals for smoking, and while work is in progress each man labours ardently, even fiercely. Under the hot iron roof, lightly clad as these men are, the sweat pours off their foreheads as they bend strenuously to work. There seems to be no idler in a shed. The men are paid by results—one pound for a hundred sheep is the standard price—and friendly rivalry keeps them at high pressure. Astonishing are the “tallies” put up when circumstances are favourable, that is to say when sheep are soft-wooled and bare of belly and leg, when machines are running cool and free and the Boss of the Board is not too particular. A good deal, as you will see, depends upon the Boss of the Board. Some sheds are known as particular, others as “easy.” In some it takes a good man to shear his hundred sheep in the day, in others tallies of 150

are common, of 200 frequent, and of 220 not unknown. I have known one famous shearers to shear 220 Warrego River ewes every day for a week, and there were several other shearers who were doing their 200 in the same shed. But this is exceptional, and 150 sheep per day is still counted a big tally. I believe the record stands at something like 320, but I have yet to be convinced that any shearers can put that number through his hands and call them shorn. Lambs are paid for at the same rate as grown sheep.

So the weeks roll by till at last comes the rumour, "Cut out to-morrow!" and an air of renewed gaiety pervades the shed and wool-room. The pickers-up find their tongues and give the shearers jibe for jibe, the "ringer" or flier of the shed makes one final effort to break away from the watchful eye of the boss and reach his 200, the learner makes a last desperate attempt to put up a tally of fifty, and the very machines seem to hum and rattle with renewed vigour.

The shearers' horses, which have been spelling girth-deep in the river grass, are run up to the yard, and each proud owner notes how his favourite hackney has put on flesh to fit him for the long trip before him. There is much chaffing and fun as the horses are caught; fresh and lusty after their rest some of them

buck and pig-jump, and a scattered pack or an upset rider causes endless amusement. One by one the shearers mount and ride away, some to a second or third shed, some to their far-away southern homes; some, alas! to the nearest public-house to be robbed barefacedly of their hard-earned money over the poisonous whisky of the Bush.

BRINGING DOWN THE WOOL

“ So, by lash and lurid order
They will swing her through the Border
With the dust upon her loading making extra weight to pull,
While the drunken township loafer
Staggers blindly from his sofa
Just to see the first team over with the Thurulgoona wool.”
The Near-Side Leader.

IN Australia not the least interesting phase connected with the sheep-shearing is the loading of the wool waggons and the steering of the teams across the wide Western plains to the railways, by which the great bales are sped across the continent to the ships and so to the markets of the world.

The wool is pressed by leverage into strong bales, which take an oblong shape when tightly filled; the weight of each of these varies from three hundred-weight to five hundredweight or over, according to the nature and sort of the wool which is packed into them. Thus a bale of First Combing Scoured Ewe Wool might tip the scale at the former figure or very little over it, while a bale of Greasy Locks or Belly Wool would weigh somewhere about the latter amount.

When pressed these bales are sewn and weighed and then handed over to the brander, who, by means of the stencil plates, a brush and some branding ink, places on each the name of the owner, the name or station brand of the property, and a description of the class of wool which that particular bale contains. The heavy packages are then rolled into a corner of the wool-room to await the arrival of the first team. At the larger sheds, where sixty or eighty shearers are busy all day, the bales leave the presses with astonishing rapidity, and the great wool-room is soon packed to the roof if waggons are not constantly in attendance to keep the wool away.

All handling of wool bales is done with wool hooks, in the use of which the men employed in the city warehouses are noted experts; but not so all sheep-station hands, and many and ludicrous are the predicaments in which these fellows find themselves when obliged to become wool porters for the time being. One will make a dive at a rolling bale with his hook, only to find the bale swerve away from him and the hook fly out of his hand into the corner of the room in close proximity to a comrade's head. Another will set a heavy bale rolling, and, striking his hook into it, will hold on tightly till he finds himself dragged off his feet with perhaps the un-

wieldy bale lying across his chest or legs. Very different are the motions of the expert. With scarcely an effort he sets a four-hundredweight bale in motion, then, catching it deftly with his hook, he twirls it on its edge and drops it exactly into the position which he has chosen for it with the least possible amount of exertion.

In due course the waggon arrives. Sometimes the station owner carts his wool to the railway station with his own station team, but more often he deposes this duty to one of the travelling teamsters who make a living as carriers on the Western roads. These men, with their great table-top waggons and teams of ten to fourteen horses or twelve to eighteen bullocks, are the links between the civilised world and the wonder and mystery and industry of the sparsely-settled Bush. All day they plough through the mud of the flooded river-flats or plunge through the grey dust of the sandhills, and at night you see their camp-fires in the river timber and hear the jangle of their horse and bullock bells as the tired beasts go feeding through the starlit grass.

It is a weary plodding round for man and beast; but all the drivers ask for is a "good season" and they are content. When there is plenty of grass and

water their troubles are few—*too much* water, however, is undesirable, as we shall see later. But when the river is only a chain of fast-drying mud-holes and the plains are a brown and bladeless desert, then the lot of both the driver and the driven is one little to be desired. But, fair weather or foul, rain or sunshine, drought or flood, the wool must be hauled to the railway to be in time for the forthcoming sales; so the sore-footed bullocks and the weary sore-shouldered horses, that would have been so glad of only one day's rest in the knee-deep station grass, are yoked and harnessed at grey dawn. The ponderous waggon with its broad-tyred wheels is pushed into place at the end of the wool-room and the important work of loading is begun.

The amount of help given to the teamster at this work depends a good deal upon circumstances and the temper and generosity of the man in charge of the shed. If there are plenty of men about and it happens to be a day when the sheep are too wet to shear, or some race meeting or cricket match has caused a break in the routine of the work, it may chance that some four or five "rouseabouts" are available for this service; but when the engine is spitting smoke and cinders at the sun, and the belt is running round the driving wheel, and the whirr of

the shafting and the rattle of cutter and comb fills the long shed from rafter to floor, then the teamster is lucky if *one* man can be spared. However, as teamsters generally travel in pairs he can, as a rule, count upon his mate for assistance.

Most sheds have a high stage at the back of the wool-room from which the waggons are loaded. This stage is reached by a sloping gangway from the floor of the room, and up this gangway two men can easily roll the heaviest bale, and from the top of the stage load the first tier of the waggon with ease. The second tier, indeed, presents no great difficulty, as the stage is high enough to make necessary only a slight lift.

The first tier of the bales is laid on the level floor of the waggon. The second tier is set upon the top of the first tier, with this difference only, that the outside bales are laid out upon the guard rail, so far that they have to be supported by leaning sticks, set up from the ground, until the ropes have fastened them in their place. This setting out of the second tier gains a wider surface for the top loading to rest on. The third tier is loaded exactly on top of the second, but the men now find it necessary to lay two strong pine saplings in such a way as to form a sloping gangway from stage to waggon. The fourth

tier will, in the ordinary load, consist of only three or four bales, for by this time the waggon has swallowed up some seven or eight tons of wool, and that is about as much as a ten-horse team can draw over roads so arbitrary as those of the Western Bush. But supposing a man to have sixteen or eighteen bullocks, as much as ten, twelve or even fourteen tons may on occasion be drawn, and this will necessitate another full tier at least, perhaps two more. This makes a towering and imposing load, but is scarcely desirable upon the rough Bush roads, where so much top weight has a tendency to turn even these heavy waggons over in the deep ruts of the river-tracks. Needless to say if it is contemplated to stack a waggon to this great height more assistance than that of one man will be required to hoist the bales to the top of the load.

When the great rectangular bundles are all set in place the roping begins. Powerful ropes—as thick as a man's wrist—are used, and the system by which they are drawn tight is that of “twitch sticks.” A rope is slung loosely round the second tier of bales and held in position from below by men holding forked sticks. The teamster then inserts a short, strong twitch stick into the looped slack of the rope, and turning it over and over draws the rope tighter

and tighter until it cuts like a tight girdle into the waist of the corner bales. Then he lays the stick level along the rope, and with strong twine binds stick and rope together. That tier is then securely fastened in its place. The next tier above is similarly dealt with, and the next, and so on. Cross-ropes are then tied across the top and down to the guard rails of the waggon, and these are also "twitched" and securely fastened. Then the load is pronounced well and duly roped by the teamster's shout as he leaps to the ground—" *She'll ride!*"—and to do him and his methods justice, she generally *does* ride.

Any odds and ends belonging to the driver, any bales of chaff for the horses, or such indispensable impedimenta, are carried up by ladder and placed upon the top of the load, and then the great ship of the plains stands ready freighted for her voyage.

Almost always two teams or three start in company, for the drivers never know the hour when they may need help from one another, when the whips are cracking and the chains straining and eighteen bullocks are lacking the strength to shift a load which twenty-eight may pull with ease. For the teamsters, in crossing a "soft" place, will "double

bank " their teams on each waggon and so be of mutual assistance.

And now the twelve horses are all chained up and stand, two and two, in a long line in front of the loaded waggon. The teamster walks along the line and flicks one and another to make them stand up to the collar. Then with a cheery word of command he adjures them to "Bend and shift it! Get up, Dolly! Up, Power! Up, Boxer! Gee, Boys!" There is a tremor of tense chain, a scramble of feet and a rattle of "spreaders," and the ten horses move slowly forward, pulling like one, while behind, the towering load lurches drunkenly out of the deep loading-ruts.

The driver walks beside his wise old leader, steering him to the right or left with a whispered "Gee off!" or "Come here!" as occasion requires. The men who have helped to load wipe the sweat off their brown foreheads and go back to their usual labour, and the dust-covered boundary riders, who are bringing a flock of woolly sheep to the shed, turn in their saddles and wave the teamster good speed as he turns out of the gate on to the broad stock-route that leads to town, on the first of his twelve-mile stages.

The sun is very low behind the mulga trees when the horses of the two teams are steadied near the bank of the river or edge of the swamp at some convenient camping place. One by one they are set free from the chains, the hames are unfastened and the collars dropped. Bells are tied round the necks of two or three of them—those least sociable and those most liable to wander. One by one they go down to the river to drink, and from there to wander out among the rich cool blue-grass, which they tug up in great mouthfuls, for they have not fed since morning.

The moon comes swinging up among the trees and the two drivers light a fire and set their "billy" to boil. The "tucker box" is taken from one of the waggons, and there in the weird silence of the brooding Bush they take their evening meal. After supper the men sit by the blazing fire and smoke black tobacco, yarning to one another in the rough slang of civilisation's outposts—talking of the roads, of the shearing, even of politics and the national issues, but mostly, perhaps, of their horses, and the loads they have lifted and the swamps they have crossed, and of the blue "heelers" or cattle dogs which lie coiled at their feet in the circle of firelight.

After a while they lie down—seldom troubling to

undress—in the bunks or cots which are swung under the rear of each waggon and simply consist of two pine saplings with a couple of sacks fastened across them; and there they fade into dreamland, lulled by the now distant tinkle of the horses' bells.

The saddle horses, of which each man has one, are fastened to the waggons each night with stout ropes and fed with chaff, or, if they are very quiet and good campers, and grass is plentiful, they are hobbled and belled and turned out near the camp after the other horses have gone some distance away. All day these saddle horses are either ridden by the teamsters, or, when not wanted for that purpose, are tied behind the waggon, while the teamsters vary the long monotony of the road by walking.

The manner of tying is worth notice. To simply attach a halter to the back of the waggon would mean a shock to the unfortunate animal at each starting of the teams—and a wool waggon is constantly being stopped and started, especially where the roads are bad—so an ingenious harness of rope has been devised which is hung over the horse, and instead of his neck being nearly dislocated at each renewal of the waggon's motion, the rope breeching tightens across his quarters and draws him steadily forward without shock or possible injury.

The chief use of these horses, besides their handiness in allowing a driver to keep alongside his team in flooded country, is to round up the straggling herd in the grey morning, when the tinkling bells are scattered through the lignum bushes, and maybe one or two of the more venturesome spirits have wandered far afield. The team horses of the two waggons are driven up to the camp in one large bunch, and they are then caught and bridled one by one, collared, chained, and hooked up in place. Should any rowdy colt or cunning old warrior break out of the bunch and gallop away, the blue cattle dog steals after him, nipping and heeling till, frightened and exhausted, the truant comes racing back to the camp. After an hour's hard work the last chain is hooked, the word of command is given, the wheels revolve, the black mud splashes or the grey dust rolls, and the great load goes lurching on its way to town.

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Far as the eye can see, across the river-flat and the great plain beyond it, stretches one wide street of grey water. The gum trees near the river stand up through it like lonely beleaguered giants, and on the plain the scattered lignum bushes only add to the desolation of the scene. The road, which in dry seasons follows the bends of the river, is now, by force

of necessity, formed along the edge of the red sandhills further out; these bits of high ground form a means of travelling the otherwise impassable river-roads in time of flood, but they do not connect with one another, and every mile or two an intervening bit of water-covered black plain has to be negotiated if the journey is to be continued and not to resolve itself into a camp on the sandhill edge to wait till the flood goes down. In these "lignum swamps"—so called from the lignum bushes which grow in them—lies half the tragedy of the struggling West. When the water drains away they are found to be covered with the carcasses of bullocks and horses that have gone down in the fierce bondage of the wool-teams, and been cast adrift from the cruel chains to take their chance with the waiting carrion birds.

The first team comes ploughing down through the sandhill dust and stops at the edge of the water. The second teamster walks forward and joins the first, and a council of war is held. The men know what they are about to face, and the horses—poor brutes—know it too; but there are eight tons of Carrara wool on that towering load above them, and, swamp or sandhill, mud or flood, that wool must go to town.

The teamsters, who know every flood mark on the

plains, note by the height of the water on a certain lignum bush that they can with luck make the passage, and they walk back to their places and start the horses. There is a creak of protesting springs, a splashing of hoofs, and the great load lurches down into the swamp. The horses have had to pull coming over the sandy hill, but here they must exert every ounce of strength that is in them. The whips crack like rifle-shots, and the sound, leaping far over the still water, scares flock after flock of black duck and teal out of the bushes, and then dies away among the pine trees on the ridge. The horses struggle and strain and stumble on the treacherous footing, but in spite of every effort the waggon moves slower, sinking deeper in the black mud at every turn of the wheels, till at last the good grey leader trips in an old wheel-rut hidden by the water and falls. The waggon comes to a standstill, and the driver, mud spattered from foot to head, rides forward on his stumbling hack and curses volubly. But before he reaches the leaders the grey is on his feet, making the mud and water fly as he tugs at his chains. "Now, you forgotten fool, what are you fighting at? Do you expect to pull the whole blamed thing by yourself?" is the only gratitude he gets for his quick recovery.

The man rides back along the line and straightens his team into the chains for another pull; then he starts them: "Gee, Power! Gee, Dolly! *Get up*, Diver, you lazy (adjective) cow!"—punctuating his orders with a lash at as many horses as he can reach from where he is sitting. Nobly the gallant beasts respond, nearly every one of the team lying down against the collar with determination—forgetting sore shoulders and weariness, intent only on moving their load. Still the waggon does not move. Stopping their futile efforts the driver lets them rest a moment or two and then starts them again, but this time one or two of the more cunning have realised that the task is beyond them, and they make no pretence of pulling, hanging back in their chains, while the good ones strain their hearts out in their efforts and the teamster curses and flogs the laggards till his whip-arm aches.

It is of no avail; the great waggon is sinking deeper in the mud at every pull—bogged down to the axles, and there is nothing for it but to get help and "double bank." The second teamster unhooks six of his horses and puts them on in front of the first team. Then both men ride down the long line and straighten up the horses till every chain is tight. At a given signal the long team is started, and the

men shout encouragement and threat at the struggling beasts: "Get up there, Bonnie! Up, Bloomer! Up, Paul! Nugget, you lazy sweep! Wait till I get at you!" The tug-chains ring, the spreaders lash the churned brown water, and the waggon rocks, moves a little, and then sticks fast again. "Slew 'em over, Bob!" calls one driver, and the man steering the leaders moves them over with the whip till they are standing at an angle of forty-five with the waggon. "*Now*, try 'em!"

Once more the loud notes of command ring out, the whips fall, the chains rattle, and the creaking waggon lurches and swings. A chain parts with a snap, and a couple of leaders stumble forward and fall with a heavy splash. Amid blasphemy the parted links are joined with several turns of fencing wire—always carried for such emergencies as this—and once more the horses are hooked up and started.

This time the waggon wheels are "slewed," or turned, out of the deep rut in which they have sunk, and with a lurch the load comes up on to the higher and somewhat firmer ground. After pulling forward for a hundred yards or so, the six leading horses are taken off and back to their own waggon, and the slow journey goes on; such assistance may be needed

half a dozen times in crossing a half mile of swamp.

So, inch by inch, and yard by yard, are the great loads dragged to town; and as the waggons rumble over the river bridge and down the main street to the railway station there is only the dried mud on the harness, and the weary step of the patient horses, to tell to those of us who know the West what it has cost the carriers in bringing down the wool.

IN THE GRIP OF THE DROUGHT

"All day we had driven the starving sheep to the scrub where
the axes ply,
And the weakest had lagged upon weary feet and dropped
from the ranks to die ;
And the crows flew up from the rotting heaps and the ewes
too weak to stand,
And the fences flaunted red skins like flags and the dour
drought held the land."

The Last Muster.

No animal is better off than a sheep in Australian pastures when the season is good and the grass plentiful and water near at hand; but there is a reverse to the medal, and no dumb brute so plumbs the depths of misery as the sheep when compelled to make his living through a protracted Australian drought.

Who that has ever gone through the experiences of a two years' spell of rainless weather will ever forget the bitterness of it? Day following day in cloudless brilliance. Heat-wave after heat-wave rolling up from the infinite distance in a shimmering intensity of scorn. The harsh calling of the carrion birds, hovering over the weaklings of the flock with a

boding shadow of dark wings. The unutterable stench of decaying carcasses. The low murmuring moan of the thirsty cattle as they tramp the dusty pathways to where the water was, but is no more. The wild things of range and plain become tame and friendly to man by the stress of a common adversity. It is sad to see the gallant team horses, weak from want of food and water, abandoned to die by the wayside; or to see the wild horses' carcasses lying twenty together where some boundary fence has built them a graveyard, the ground beaten hard along the barrier that banned them from the river. It is sad to see the team bullocks turned out, weak and wasted with starvation, to flounder in the soft mud of the fast-drying waterholes, tortured by the exultant crows, lifting pleading brown eyes to the passers-by. But the saddest sight in all this grim world of dumb despair and unutterable anguish is supplied by the poor, patient sheep, as they go stilting back and forward from the drying creek to the dusty ranges, fighting hard for life in their dull, hopeless, plodding way.

In the cool of the morning, long before the sun is up, you can hear them pattering through the dried gum leaves with restless feet. The blue-grass has long since withered and blown away in the hot

winds, and there is little left in the way of food except these bitter brown leaves. Sometimes a leading sheep, stronger and more persistent than the others, nosing among the dead sticks, finds a tuft of dried wire-grass that has escaped the scorching wind and weather. With an involuntary bleat of surprise and gladness he brings all near him rushing to the find; one nibble and it is gone, and the broad phalanx of the leaders widens out again as it drives forward with lowered heads across the sand. For the leaders there is always hope, for the laggards there is none. Trailing, weak and wasted, behind the main body of the flock, they follow on—follow on—past all hope and all endeavour, stopping from time to time to shake their heads in impotent challenge to the crows, who with a devilish cunning are not to be denied, knowing well that the knell is sounded and the hour of feast at hand.

Now and then one weaker than the rest will stumble over a stick or a sudden unevenness in the ground, falling limply and lying where he falls. Then the crows settle and creep closer and closer, until they are sure the victim is beyond resistance. Then with a flap of the wing they are perched on the helpless head, tearing, gorging, plucking at the bleeding eyes. Sometimes the pain will goad the

maddened creature to its feet and send it stumbling forward after the distant flock with blood streaming from empty eye-sockets.

In all the bitter rivalry of bird with bird and beast with beast there is nothing that equals the cruel ferocity of the carrion bird when he bids for his prey with the blood lust of his kind. Is it any wonder that the bushman of the Australian plains, who loves all animals as he loves his children, hates the crow with a hatred so intense and deep-rooted that he can scarcely bear its name mentioned without breaking out into a paroxysm of rage and invective? It is the only bird he wantonly destroys, the only living thing he will catch and systematically torture.

The ever-busy vanguard of the flock streams on through the grey of the waking day, dim ghosts among the trees, a great helpless, hungry army with Death itself stepping slowly in its ranks. A great flush of red rises above the mulga trees, where the tyrant sun is gathering up his scourges for his daily task. With one accord the leaders of the flock swing slowly to the south, where their God-given instinct tells them there is water, fast diminishing day by day. The sun is barely above the low trees in the west, yet already his whips are felt. The

sheep leave the timber and thread down upon the dusty plain which lies between them and the far-off gum trees that mark the river. With steady, dogged steps the stronger leaders pick out the trodden sheep pads and hurry forward on their long journey. The plain is bare as a floor, and the grey dust gathers in little whirling clouds about the marching flock, but nothing can divert them from their purpose or blind their sense of direction.

The sun is soon high in the heavens, millions of flies are about and adding to the tortures of the day, and through it all marches the pitiful army of despair, intent only on reaching the shade and water before the heat becomes unbearable. Soon the faint, far-off scent of the water comes to the dusty nostrils; a leader bleats, and far off in the rear a thirsty camp-follower gives back an answering call. Then the cry goes from one to another till the plain rings with it. Hope lifts the heads of the laggards. The leaders quicken their steps to a run. The smell of the water grows stronger, and, at last, headlong down the dusty bank of the river the front rank rushes madly to the stagnant pool which is all that is left of the proudly-flowing bank-full torrents of the last big rains. Fiercely the sheep shoulder each other for a place, frightened, as it

seems, that the supply will diminish even before they have drunk their fill.

The front rank drinks long and greedily. Their legitimate thirst is soon satisfied, but they are loth to leave the water, for the horror of the dusty plain and the terror of the barren ridges is in their hearts. You can see it in their eyes when they lift their heads and begin slowly to retreat from the water, lifting their feet with difficulty out of the clinging mud, and struggling back on to the dusty bank.

As each sheep relinquishes its place it is filled by one of its fellows, and the whole of the pool is lined with a rushing, pushing, struggling crowd, shouldering one another to get to the water and shouldering one another to get away from it.

Here and there one, impatient of delay, leaps over the drinking line into the shallow water and stands belly-deep in the brown pool, laying his parched lips along the surface with a never-ending delight. Slowly the surfeited drinkers climb the steep bank, their ribs full stretched like barrel staves, to lie down in the shade of the gum trees till the cool of evening shall again drive them out across the plain to the timbered ranges, seeking for the sustenance so hard to find. But the tragedy of the noonday is supplied by the staggering rearguard that now

comes stumbling in, too weak to break into a run at the calling scent of the water, too weak to bleat an echo to the hopeful voices of their brothers in the van. Slowly they creep to the edge of the bank, looking down with a vacant, disinterested stare that is even more pitiful than the headlong haste of the leaders.

“*Quem Jupiter vult perdere, dementat prius.*” It is the truth. At last they summon courage to step down the dusty trail on stilted forelegs, trembling even under the slight weight of their wasted bodies. Slowly, very slowly, a step at a time, they approach the blue edge of slime that fences the pool. The strong sheep have hustled and jostled and gone, and the weaklings may choose their places; but all effort to protect themselves has vanished. With the same hopeless stilted stride they plunge into the clinging clay that will be the grave-cloth of so many of them. Then they drink, not eagerly, gladly, impetuously, but slowly, furtively, mechanically, as if impelled by some strange power outside themselves rather than by the natural impulse of thirst. Satisfied, they lift their heads and essay to turn round; but they cannot lift their weak limbs from the holding clay. The crow waiting in the dead gum tree croaks expectantly. Another

struggle, only to sink deeper in the bog. Slowly the poor helpless creature gives way to the inevitable and subsides into the cool grey ooze without further struggle, looking round with sad, pathetic eyes for the help that may or may not come.

And it makes very little difference whether it comes or not. Only a difference, perhaps, between to-day and to-morrow—Death, speedy and kind, before the morning light, or *one* more trip to the ranges and *one* more trail to the creek, before the great Liberator sets the tired feet free.

And when help comes it comes this way. Over the steep bank of the creek rides a man on a lean, leg-weary horse, with a sore-footed sheep-dog limping after him. He carries a rifle, resting butt on knee, and swings it to his shoulder when he sees the dark form of his deadliest foe outlined on the dead limb of the gum tree. But the crows are cunning, and this one is out of shot in a moment, chuckling hoarsely as he takes a safer perch to bide his time. "Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen," counts the man, mechanically, as he surveys the weaklings firmly held in the mud. Then he gets slowly down from his saddle and sets his rifle against a stump, letting the thirsty horse walk down to the water with bridle trailing. The stockman goes to each sheep in turn

and draws it out of the mud and sets it on its feet. The weaker ones fall down at once, but he raises them and steadies them till the benumbed limbs find strength to do their office. Then the hopeless cripples crawl painfully up the bank to join their comrades resting in the shade. A couple of the sheep have already been attacked by the crows and their eyes picked out; these the man kills and skins, hanging the bloody red pelts on the limbs of a neighbouring tree to add to the horrible collection of blood-stained banners that strew the pathway of the Army of the Doomed.

THREE COLONIAL COUSINS

“The emu flying with her startled brood,
The weird brown kangaroo,
The dingo stealing to his feast of blood
Beneath the night's dark blue.”

Bluegrass Memories.

THE emu stands about five feet high in his ordinary black walking shoes, but when at bay upon the open plain, surrounded by a crowd of snapping, yelping dogs, he draws himself up by some means till he stands about ten feet in height, and his kicks are harder than a healthy mule's. He is pretty speedy, and if he gets a fair start will give a good horse all he knows to catch him for a distance of a mile or so, but if pressed at the start he very soon gives up. His feathers are, of course, valueless as compared to the ostrich's, but the bushman sets a certain value on them as pipe-cleaners, and a bunch of them can be seen in most Bush huts.

The emu's musical ability is confined to a peculiar drumming noise which sounds like a consumptive ghost coughing, and the direction of which is strangely hard to determine. The hen emu lays

about a dozen eggs as a rule, and both birds take a turn at hatching them; and when disturbed on their nests they fight wickedly, chasing intruding dogs for long distances, and even threatening men on horseback and valiantly facing the bite of the big stock-whip. To go up to a nest on foot before the bird has left is to tempt Providence. The nest is of the simplest kind—a little dry grass put together, in the hollow of which are deposited the shiny dark green eggs. These eggs are greatly prized in the Bush as ornaments, and are in demand among visitors to the Australian back-country as souvenirs. They are generally carved into all manner of artistic and inartistic designs by chipping through the hard outer covering of the shell, thus exposing in parts the paler green below, forming, when well done, an excellent bas-relief. I have also seen the inner shell painted by hand and covered with a delicate tracery of landscape or seascape or Bush scene.

The principal difficulty in taking emu eggs is in finding a way of carrying them, as when a nest is found the finder is generally on horseback and busy mustering sheep or cattle, entailing probably a very long ride before the eggs can be put in a place of safety. This, on account of their great weight when

unblown, and their brittleness whether blown or not, is a very serious difficulty. But the bushman, loth to leave his prize in case some other rider should pass that way and jump his claim, will go to a good deal of trouble and inconvenience to take them with him. I have often carried from four to six eggs placed in the inside of the bosom of my shirt, and resting delicately on the support of a waistbelt, one each in the outside pockets of my coat, and one in the hand not engaged by the reins. Needless to say, in such circumstances one can only ride slowly, and for a friend to embrace one's ample girth at such a moment would be—well—eggsasperating, to say the least of it. Some bushmen, of more forethought, carry with them in the months of nesting—which are May and June—broad strips of calico and unlimited string. Then, when a nest is found, the rider dismounts and carefully rolls each egg in the calico, tying the strip tightly round with string above each egg, thus forming a lengthy bundle not unlike a string of round sausages; this he ties collar-fashion round his horse's neck and secures at the top. He then may ride at any pace without fear of chipping a single shell.

A flock of young emus following the parent birds is a very quaint and pretty sight, but one that is

generally irresistible to the Bush sportsman, who feels bound to "have a go at them." Once in full flight, and the horsemen pressing them closely, they split in all directions; it is every one for himself and the de'il tak' the hin'most! Singling out one of the young ones, the rider races up alongside, and swinging his long lash round the bird's neck, gives a sudden jerk and pulls his victim on its back. He then leaps down and secures his prize. They are thus often caught and carried home to the stations as pets for the children, and they soon become very tame, but almost invariably develop a desire to peck at horses' eyes, which makes them dangerous property on a station, and they generally have in the end to be destroyed, so mischievous do they become.

The kangaroo is one of the most grotesque animals that ever ran or hopped. Like the emu, he is considered fair game for the hunter, and with more reason, as his fur is of considerable value, especially in the winter months, and his tail makes excellent soup. He covers the ground in immense leaps of twenty or thirty feet when going at top pace, and he is very clever in crossing fallen timber or fences, seldom misjudging his distance at a leap or making a mistake. There have been many arguments in the

Australian press and elsewhere as to whether the kangaroo strikes his tail upon the ground when travelling at speed. Of course, it is now a well-known and established fact that he does not. The tail supplies the motive power for the leap, and swinging up and down, its great muscular strength propels the body forward, but it never actually strikes the ground; though when the kangaroo is resting or moving very slowly the tail is used as a prop or balance. The kangaroo's tail is immensely strong, as thick at the butt as a man's arm, and formed of sinews of unusual strength and thickness. These are frequently used by the bushmen for sewing hides and harness, and will stand a heavy strain. They are also used for the more delicate work of sewing up wounds and have proved their worth in this.

Kangaroos are, of course, dependent upon grass for food, and in time of drought one sees them gradually pining away; but if there is any "feed" to be found within a hundred miles or so there will our friend betake himself, and the squatter who has perhaps saved a small paddock of good grass with difficulty for his horses will find it invaded and continually patronised by all the "hoppers" in the district.

Many men make a living during the winter months solely by shooting kangaroos. Of this class were many of those who went under the banner of the Bush contingents to fight for queen and country and stalk human kangaroos upon the African veldt. Taking their rifles and ammunition, their food, tents and the simple necessities which go towards making up Bush life, these men camp at some creek or lagoon, and, using it as their headquarters, walk many miles on range and plain after their quarry, and though the kangaroo is by nature shy and wary, the long range of the rifles gives the stalker an advantage, and the skinned carcasses of his victims testify to his skill and perseverance in pursuit. The kangaroo-shooter becomes very skilful in skinning the animal when shot. While the body is still warm a few quick cuts with the knife at the right places enable him to catch hold of the skin with both hands, and, putting his foot on the beast's neck, to strip the hide off from tail to head with one deft pull. Nearly all the large sheep stations have a pack of kangaroo dogs, like greyhounds, only taller and heavier, and nothing is more exciting or amusing—from the man's point of view—than a kangaroo hunt. The dogs, which are very swift of foot, soon run up alongside their victims, although in many cases the

latter have from a quarter to half a mile of start; behind them thunder the mounted bushmen, riding recklessly, and cheering them on with lusty vigour.

Presently the mob of flying kangaroos split up in all directions; each man follows his favourite dog and cheers him to fresh exertions. Soon the kangaroo becomes thoroughly exhausted and stops, facing the dogs and kicking savagely with swift hind-feet. Some dogs will dash in with skill and pluck, and going straight for the throat will grapple and throw the heaviest kangaroo. But to the hesitating or careless dog it is a dangerous game, and many a gashed shoulder and rib laid bare testify to the punishing power of the 'roo at bay. Many men delight in leaping from their horses at this stage, and with stirrup iron or heavy stock-whip butt joining in hand-to-hand struggle with the big desperate beasts; but there is a good deal of danger connected with it and most men do not care to risk being ripped open for the paltry laurels to be won in such a fight.

In such manner dies the male or "old man" of the mob. The females run until pulled down; the younger ones, the "flying does" as we call them, are the swiftest of all the runners of the Bush, and

frequently manage to get clear away, but the older and heavier does, or those which carry young, are soon overtaken. As most people know, the doe carries her young in a little pouch between the forepaws, and when hard pressed by the dogs she stoops and lets the little one jump out, and a queer naked-looking little thing it is as it hops away, like a skinned rat, on its hind legs. Then the doomed mother runs gallantly on, satisfied if she can keep going long enough to draw the dogs away from her offspring and give it a chance for its life; but it generally ends in both being slain—the doe for her skin, and the poor motherless little baby out of pity for its helplessness if left to the wild Bush to take its chance.

The last of our three colonial cousins, and perhaps the most interesting, is the dingo. The dingo is more often heard than seen, and more often tracked by his ill deeds than heard and seen together. He is the wild dog of Australia, the coyote of the Commonwealth, the wolf of the Southern Cross. Endowed with the wondrous cunning which enables him by practice to cope with every wile of man—his sworn enemy and avenger of the ravaged flocks—he is the most destructive and mischievous Australian living, and the hardest to punish. For his thieving

ways we hate him, but most of all for his wanton cruelty. An occasional sheep, or even new-born calf, we might spare him, for even the most useless members of Bush society must live. But, not content with taking one sheep from a flock for his needs, he and his companions in sin invariably chase and worry from a dozen to two dozen others, mangling and tearing and disembowelling, so that the poor wretches have to be destroyed afterwards if not actually done to death by the wanton raiders.

The dingo travels fast and far. One night he will harry your sheep, leave half a dozen dead and as many more shoulder-torn and bitten standing like sentinels about them, and by the first streak of dawn he will be twenty miles away. And in this fact lies the difficulty of bringing him to book. The bushman, who has long studied his habits, has tried many ways of getting equal with him, the most successful means being those of poison and trap. In poisoning great care has to be taken, as so shy and sensitive to smell is our brigand of the ranges that to handle poisoned meat with the naked hand is to put him at once upon his guard. Bits of meat with strychnine hidden in knife slashes upon them are strewn through the paddocks. Dead sheep, those killed by the

dingo for preference, are inoculated with the insidious pink powder, for he frequently returns to feed where he has killed. But instinct appears to warn him, and even the most careful and expert poisoners rarely catch the genuine full-grown dingo, though often a cross-bred or half-wild sheep-worrier will fall into their hands.

With traps there is more chance of success; but dingo trapping is an art to be learnt only by a life-long application to the habits and mode of living of the wild dog. Some men, indeed, make it the business of their lives, and past-masters in the art make an excellent living thereby. For lonely months they stay in the gloom of the big ranges, camping by themselves, and following patiently day after day the tracks of the marauders. So clever do these men become that they will tell you almost exactly where a dog may be found at a particular time of the day, and yet they seldom see him, all their knowledge being gained from a footmark here or a scratch there. So thoroughly do these trappers become acquainted with the ways of the dogs that sometimes in a paddock of five or six thousand acres they will set, maybe, only two or perhaps three traps, and yet catch the dog they have been tracking and following for many days. And in this way: first,

they find by tracks some little sheep-pad or old unused cart road on which the dog passes, for dingoes appear to favour the same path when crossing a district as a rule; by the side of this pathway they will notice one tree, maybe, to which the dog has often turned, and which seems to attract him, for here are found his deep and heavy scratchings, as though they were some impertinent message to the man who would try to circumvent him. At the foot of this tree, with rare skill and infinite patience and care, the trapper will set one of his heavy iron-jawed traps; further on at the side of the same little path he may lean a stick against a tree. This being somewhat unusual, it at once attracts the dog's attention, and even if he has by some rare instinct become aware and suspicious of man's presence at the other tree and has passed it by, he may yet possibly be inveigled into making closer inspection of the leaning stick, when click! at his feet suddenly, and the pain gnaws into the bone as his wild yell rings through the ranges. Some trappers set spring-guns across the little tracks where the dogs pass, with wires which, as soon as touched, release a charge of shot at the height of a dog's shoulder; but these the landowner discourages as being dangerous to sheep and to passing horsemen; while their liability to being frequently set off by

wandering wallabies makes them of very little use to the trapper of dogs. Naturally the trapper almost invariably carries his rifle with him, for one never knows the moment of the day when just a glimpse of the enemy may be caught, stealing like a yellow wraith among the trees; and so deadly are these bushmen with the rifle that many a dog has fallen to a snapshot at a great distance in this way.

The trappers are well paid, at so much for each dog-scalp delivered, and half-price for pups; and though sometimes many weeks pass before they bring a dog to book, yet that dog's death may secure for them eight or ten pounds, as, besides the squatter's payment, there are societies in the sheep districts which distribute a large bonus for every dog-scalp returned. Sometimes a trapper will get as many as three or four dogs in one week. Occasionally he has the good luck to find a litter of dingo pups in a hollow log or in some rocky cave high up in the ranges. He then proceeds to hide until the mother returns, when he generally manages to end her career with a dose of lead. Dingoes are sometimes run down in the open by the boundary-riders and stockmen on horseback, and I have had many an exciting rally after them; but so cunning are

they in taking every advantage of thick scrub, of broken ground, and of cross fences, that to run one down single-handed is still considered something of a feat even among the dashing horsemen of the West.

A BUCKER IN THE YARD

“Roll up, ye merry riders all, from hut and camp and town !
You’ll have to stick like plaster when the stockyard rails go
down.

But the boss will come down handsome, as the boss is wont
to come,

To the first who brings the Rebel under spurs and greenhide
home.”

The Riding of the Rebel.

“COUNTRESS for you this week, Jack,” says our overseer, stepping quickly across the yard to cut out a wild-eyed brown mare and guide her into a small yard by herself. A subdued whistle runs round the little crowd of onlookers sitting on the stockyard rails, for Countess, in the parlance of the Bush, can “buck a town down,” and Jack le Fane is our champion rough-rider and one of the finest riders on the Western side. On the big sheep stations the spare horses are usually run into the yard once a week, when those which have been at work at the station are let go and a new lot are picked to take their places. As these new ones, in a good season, come in fresh and lusty from the blue-grass, it is then, if ever, that they have spirit and

inclination to buck and to enter upon those glorious fights for mastery between man and horse which are the delight of the Australian bushman.

The fresh horses are usually drafted on Saturday afternoon and turned out in the station paddock until Monday morning; and it is in the rosy dawn of those Monday mornings that the fun begins, when the stockmen start out mustering upon horses which have not felt a bit or girth for many weeks.

Playful or vicious, according to their breeding and temperament, almost all of them "prop" or "go to market" in some form or other. Some are old and noted buck-jumpers, hopeless rogues whose names and reputations are known far beyond the station yards; others are youngsters which have been resting since their breaking-in, and are now for the first time to renew acquaintance with the heavy saddle and the sharp, relentless spur.

Though, as I have said, the riding of these fresh horses is, as a rule, left to the Monday morning, it often happens that a particularly nasty one will be tackled and ridden on the Saturday afternoon, as the stockman has then more leisure to tackle the outlaw with care and patience than at the hurried start on a busy working morning; more especially

as the majority of these horses only buck when first ridden after a spell, and, having met their master, will go away quietly when mounted the second time.

Countess runs into the small yard shaking her head ominously and switching her long untidy tail, and the heavy rails are dropped into their places behind her.

After all the required horses have been drafted, and the big mob has been taken back to its pasture in the mulga ranges, the little lot of fresh horses is let out into the small station paddock. Countess runs round the small yard and whinnies to her mates, and Jack takes his bridle and goes in to catch her.

Countess objects to be caught, and flashes round the yard until a stock-whip is brought into play, then she faces up to the stockman, haughty and unwilling, with flanks and shoulders a lather of white foam already. She holds her wicked little head high in the air and blows through her scarlet nostrils like a frightened colt, pawing the sand uneasily. Jack steps up to her, and stroking her neck with the back of his right hand carefully adjusts the bridle with his left, watching her warily the while; for Countess is treacherous,

and has been known to knock a man down with a blow of her forefoot at just such a moment as this.

Jack fastens the throat-lash and leads the mare across the yard. The first thing to do is to look to her feet, for the horses running out unshod among the swamps grow hoof with astonishing rapidity, and nearly all of them, after three to six weeks' spell, require to have their hoofs trimmed. These station horses, with hardly an exception, have never seen a blacksmith or a shoe, and will work for years upon the sandy, dust-covered plains without artificial aid; but, of course, in stony districts—though there the hoofs grow much harder, to suit the conditions of Nature—it is necessary to shoe any horse that is constantly at work. In the case of a quiet horse this hoof trimming is comparatively easy, and is done by setting the foot upon a board and cutting the hoof carefully round with an ordinary heavy chisel and hammer, preserving the natural outline and being careful not to cut too close to any part. But with horses of the temper of the brown mare this procedure is out of the question, and a long-handled chisel has been designed which obviates the necessity of a man stooping at the feet of dangerous or restive horses, and allows him, while standing

upright beside them, to use the hammer and chisel with comparative safety.

After much backing and plunging and sparring in the dust, and not a little bad language, Jack, with the help of one of the other men, manages to get the mare's forefeet trimmed after a fashion, but to cut her hind feet without throwing and roping her is an obvious impossibility, as she will allow no one to approach her hindquarters without lashing out fiercely and rapidly. For this reason, too, the usual custom of combing and pulling the tails of the fresh horses is in her case abandoned. There are scores of horses like Countess in the Australian Bush, and always will be while they are broken in the rough-and-ready fashion usually adopted on the stations; for as long as a horse is sufficiently handled to allow of a man standing near enough to its shoulder to saddle and mount it, the breaker does not waste much time in handling it about the hind legs, for it will probably never in its life be required to enter a stable, and every bushman knows enough to keep wide of the tail end of a horse when it is tied to a rail.

Jack is handed his saddle from the fence by one of the other stockmen; and Jack's saddle is a sight to see, weighing, with all its heavy incidental ap-

A BUCKER IN THE YARD

purtenances, close upon two stone. It has immense curved knee-pads adorned with plated horse-shoes and strapped back to the body of the saddle, thigh-pads only a trifle smaller, a very low pommel fitting close down upon the horse's withers, and a dip or sweep in the seat very different from the flat, plate-like surface of the English hunting saddle.

At first sight a man unused to Bush horses and the rather unsightly gear inevitably associated with them would be inclined to say, "Why, no man could possibly fall out of that thing if he tried ever so hard!" Yet the same individual, if perched upon a genuine buck-jumper, with nothing but space in front of him and a curved backbone describing weird parabolas beneath him, would discover there were many ways of falling out of it, and that one of them at least was a speedy way. Countess snorts at the big, unwieldy saddle and springs back, dancing round at the end of the bridle reins, but Jack, shortening his hold of her with his left hand and poising the saddle on his right arm, approaches firmly but warily and rubs the leather flap softly upon the mare's shoulder. Then, raising the saddle, he sets it quietly but quickly upon her back, shaking it a little to let her know that it is there and keeping his hand upon it in case a sudden plunge should throw

it to the ground. He now stoops and reaches for the dangling girth, holding the mare's head well round to the near side and watching her closely, for it is at this moment that, if careless, one is apt to be kicked oneself and get seven pounds' worth of saddle knocked into a shapeless mass should the horse make a sudden plunge forward and lash out. Having gathered the girth to him, Jack raises the flap of the saddle and runs the buckle of it on to the girth strap, speaking softly to the mare all the while. One girth is generally used, a single broad band with double buckles, which fasten on two separate straps on the saddle.

Countess snorts as she feels the pressure of the band, and runs round at the end of the bridle, hunching her back and kicking out savagely. At last, getting her steadied, the stockman again gets a short hold of her head and tightens the girth, drawing it up as far as his strength will allow, for in the tightness of that girth lies the difference between danger and safety, and none knows it better than Jack le Fane. Then he draws up the surcingle by means of a lace through a ring, which gives a great leverage, and when he has finished, so tight is the surcingle that even the tight girths beneath it seem slack, and the saddle is now as firm and

steady as a rock, and to all intents and purposes is now a part of the mare.

After the saddle is on and securely fastened, many men prefer to tie up the reins to the stirrup iron and let the horse have a fling round the yard to get rid of some of its superfluous high spirits; but Jack would rather give his opponent fair play and let her tackle him in all her pride and freshness. In any case, a real rogue will seldom do much with the saddle, reserving itself for a battle royal with the master whom it well knows is the cause of the bitter servitude. So Jack puts the reins gently over Countess's head, and patting her on the neck takes a short hold of them in his left hand, together with a lock of her mane, and holding the near rein tight, keeps her head round to him while he takes the stirrup in his other hand and raises his foot. The little crowd of watchers on the fence hold their breath and watch him closely, for to see Jack le Fane mount a bad one is the sight of a twelvemonth—even here; and that Countess is notoriously hard to mount is well known by every bushman 'twixt Bourke and the Barcoo! For a moment Jack's toe touches the stirrup, then the mare, with a squeal like a pig, throws herself suddenly in the air, staggers, and falls over backwards, but Jack

has stepped quickly back and is standing unhurt and smiling at her side, still holding the reins. He gives the mare a gentle kick in the ribs and she springs to her feet, blowing the dust from her nostrils and trembling.

Again the rider shortens the reins, grips the mane, and sets his foot lightly in the stirrup; then, like a flash of light, he is in the saddle, sitting firm and erect, with his foot already in the off stirrup-iron and his reins slack. For one moment the mare stands like a statue in bronze, as though paralysed by his quick action, then she springs in the air, rearing right on end.

For a second or so it seems to the eager watchers that she must fall backwards; but, yielding to the pressure of her rider's weight upon her withers, she drops to her feet, and with a vicious squeal of rage dashes round the yard, bucking as only Countess can buck. Jack is holding the reins at their very end, yet so low is her head between her forelegs that those reins are perfectly taut; her back is arched like a fighting cat's, and it seems that, for want of a crupper, man and saddle and all must be flung over her head and dashed against the rails. Round and round she goes, close to the fence, on which the watchers pull their legs up out of danger

and cheer their champion with their merry slang. "Hang to her, Jack!" "Sit back and you'll get a longer ride!" "What ho, she bumps!" "Stick to her, good boy!" "Whip in the steel!" "She's all your own!" and a hundred similar phrases of banter and encouragement. Skilfully the stockman keeps his balance, though once, when the mare, apparently making ready for a buck forward, reared sideways instead and turned like lightning, it looked for a moment as though he were doomed to a fall; but recovering grandly, and sitting well back, with a watchful eye on every turn of the furious battling beast beneath him, he drives the spurs home in her bloodstained flanks.

For a moment Countess stands stock-still, shivering. Her flanks are heaving; she is sweat and foam from croup to star, and her mouth is bleeding where she has struck the snaffle on her forearm, but she is anything but beaten. Gathering herself suddenly, she plunges forward with a half roar, half groan; as the spurs bite she cow-kicks with her hind feet till her hoof rings on the stirrup-iron. But Jack le Fane, sitting cool and collected, knows the worst is over, and taking off his soft hat, he waves it to the "gallery," and then flogs the mare across the ribs with it; and every time the hat comes down

the maddened beast makes a fresh attempt to unseat him, but without avail. Then she stops, and stands with head down and legs apart, leaning on the bloodstained bit, temperful and treacherous, waiting her chance.

“Down with th-those rails, b-boys!” calls Jack; he is out of breath, and no wonder, for riding buck-jumpers is no child’s play. The heavy rails that form the gateways are flung down by willing hands, and horse and rider are let out into the large yard and then into the open horse-paddock. The mare launches out through the gateway, thinking she is free as she feels the grass beneath her feet, but she is pulled up by the cruel bit; and then, overcome with temper, she makes one more desperate effort to throw her hated burden. In the small yard she had no room, but out here she has full play, and she bucks “bigger” and harder than ever—turning, twisting and coming right back in her tracks; but she is nearly spent, and slowly she bucks with less and less power, till at last she gives in and trots and canters at her rider’s will. Twice round the sand-hill he takes her, and then spurs her home, a beaten mare—one more scalp upon the belt of the station’s champion rough-rider.

THE RIVER-ROADS

"Freedom and leisure are come too late,
And riches in vain bestowed,
Once a man has gone west through the Border Gate
And has camped on the Open Road."

The Bushman Abroad.

MOST of the great highways in the Australian Bush follow as much as possible the course of some large river. The advantage of this, in a land so sparsely watered and so subject to protracted drought, is obvious at a glance.

All the year long immense mobs of cattle and sheep travel incessantly north and south, east and west, grinding the sandhills to red dust and the plains to grey powder in summer and in the wet seasons to mud. Day after day the heavily-laden waggons creak slowly by with weary bullocks bending to the bows or lean horses toiling in the chains. At night in every bend grow the lights of the camp-fires, and the plains are a witching melody of horse and cattle bells. The long roads that follow such rivers as the Darling, the Warrego, the Macquarie, the Bogan, or the Lachlan necessarily pass through many pro-

perties, and at intervals of space varying from a mile to ten miles one comes upon the fences and gates that divide the big station paddocks. Before entering the boundary gate of a new run the drovers are compelled by law to give notice to the landholders, that they may send a representative to see the travellers safely through the holding, for the protection of the station stock and the station grass. For in most places upon the big rivers the road is unfenced on either side, the river forming one boundary from which a measure of half a mile is allowed for the drovers to spread and feed their stock on; beyond this they are not allowed to go, and it is to prevent such trespass that the squatter sends one of his men to pilot them through his run.

To the harassed drover who has come through innumerable difficulties over perhaps hundreds of miles of dry and barren country, and finds at last good grass upon the border of this half-mile track, the man who is set to keep him within limits is a thing of evil; and many are the wordy wars between the two, often reaching to blows, in which the drover, who gets plenty of practice and is used to giving and taking hard knocks in his precarious profession, is in all probability the winner.

It can easily be believed that this half-mile road,

eaten down by the many thousands of trampling sheep and cattle which pass along it every week, presents, save in the very best of seasons, a barren surface to the hungry beasts; so what more natural than that the drovers should keep edging outward across the imaginary line that preserves the squatter's grass? The station man interferes: "You are off the road, you'll have to move them in a bit," he says with varying politeness, according to his nature or his temper at the moment. The drover, who notes that his hungry sheep are making good use of their time upon the stolen grass, proceeds to engage the man's attention on other subjects, but possibly the squatter's representative is worthy of his trust and not to be bluffed out of his duty. Having repeated his request, which is again unnoticed, he whistles up his dog and sends him round the spreading flock. The drover, with the choicest oaths he has gathered in ten years spent between the Gulf and Goulburn, spurs his horse and pursues the dog, if possible riding over it and crippling it. In a moment the overseer is off his horse and demanding satisfaction. The drover is only too glad to oblige, and with only the drover's men to see fair play some of the bitterest battles of the overland are fought and won. Generally speaking, as I have said, the drover has the best of it, for

even should he chance to meet a man worthy of his mettle he has the satisfaction of knowing that his sheep meanwhile are filling themselves upon the grass with no one to interfere with them.

But many of the squatters, and still more of the squatters' men, have been drovers or have travelled with drovers in their time, and are inclined to be lenient to men engaged in an undertaking which they themselves know by bitter experience to be a harassing and trying one. These will close their eyes to the drover's little delinquencies, and even aid him in his endeavours to do justice to his hungry stock. They will show him, too, where he can get the best feed for his horses at night, even though it mean opening the fence into some well-grassed horse paddock. The drovers, as a rule, are duly grateful for this indulgence; and the owner, overseer or boundary-rider who thus helps them is held in kindly memory and spoken of as a White Man on all the stock roads from Bathurst to Normanton.

The team-drivers with their horses and bullocks suffer as much as the drovers from the scarcity of grass and water, and are put to many contrivances to keep their toiling beasts alive and in working condition. After sundown, when the coast is clear and there is small chance of the squatter or his men

being about, the teamsters round up the bullocks or horses, which are making a sorry pretence of feeding on the barren, dusty plain, and drive them, sometimes four or five miles or further, to where they know is good grass in a station paddock. Then stealthily breaking the wire fence, if there is no gate at hand, they put their horses in, and either return to camp or else roll themselves in a blanket and sleep beside their stock. Before the first grey streak of dawn is in the sky they have taken out their dumb comrades, who have made the best use of their time, and are well on their way back to the waggons.

If, however, the squatter or his man should be first upon the scene the teamster is either compelled to pay so much a head for his stock, or they are taken from him and driven to the nearest pound. So wages the ceaseless war of the squatter and the travelling bushman upon the river-road.

After the travelling stock and the teams perhaps the most noticeable frequenters of the river-road are the swagmen, those nomad denizens of the Western Bush, who carry from point to point, from bend to bend, their rolled blankets, and only God knows what weight of sorrow in addition. Men with strange histories are many of these, beggars who have at one time perhaps written their names to thousand-pound

cheques. Men who were princes in the golden days of Bendigo and Ballarat, or familiar figures in a far-off England which has forgotten their existence. Hopeless and futureless they tramp along the river-road through the dusty, scorching days of summer, through the mud and water of flood-time, asking only for their daily pittance of meat and flour from the stations as they pass.

Some are honestly looking for work, but the greater number merely follow the bends of the Western rivers as the bullocks follow the ruts, working out the desolate destiny which their wasted lives have shaped for them, and careless of all considerations saving those of food and lodging.

Along the river-road runs the pathway, then, of the drover, the teamster and the swagman, representing the human interest; *across* it runs the path of the birds and beasts of the Bush.

In the dry weather, when all the water-holes on the plains and in the ridges are empty, a constant stream of animals crosses to and fro from the river down the dusty trodden pads or footpaths which intersect the wheel-tracks at right angles and head away into the stony ranges.

Big mobs of sheep with lowered heads and stilted stride come slowly in, following one another with a

solemnity that would be ludicrous only that everything connected with a drought in the Bush is so pitifully pathetic. Cattle come lumbering down, switching their tails incessantly at the busy flies and breaking into a clumsy trot as they smell the water. Kangaroos with their strange, ungainly canter; emus, tall and stately, picking here and there carelessly as they walk, as though to say, "We are in no hurry, water is really no necessity to us;" wild pigs going down to their favourite wallow in the river-mud; shy dingoes skirting the scrub as much as possible and slipping like ghosts into the river timber.

Later on, when the drought has gathered in intensity, and it is only at certain deep holes at long intervals that any water is to be found in the river, the stock are often too weak to find their way to drink, and then the stockmen may be seen all day collecting them upon the plains and bringing them across the roads in little mobs and steadying them down to the water. In these days may be seen the bogged sheep and cattle lying bound in the cruel black mud, with the crows tearing at their bleeding eyes and the eagle-hawks waiting greedy for their feast; while on the logs and the low limbs of the river trees are hung, red and ghastly, the sheepskins lately gathered from the dead.

The river-road in drought time is a cruel sight, for it is inevitably at the water that so many weak beasts meet their fate on the stations, while those which have dropped out of the drovers' mobs add their number to the victims. At the height of a drought one of the commonest and the saddest sights is the drover's cart, which follows his travelling flock, laden high with raw red skins; in some cases three or four extra men are employed in nothing else but skinning those sheep that have dropped out of the ranks to die.

In flood-time the scene is changed indeed. All across the half-mile road the barley grass waves green and high. Every few hundred yards or so the gullies and ditches, which in summer are beds of red sand, now stretch out from the river like silver arms. Full to the very banks, many of them are ten to twenty feet deep and from ten to forty yards across, forming impenetrable barriers to traffic. The low ground further out from the river is a sea of shallow water from which all the station stock are moved at the first alarm; and woe betide the luckless drover who is caught upon the river-road by a rising flood in the Darling or the Lachlan! With incredible swiftness his flock is surrounded by the shallow water as it spreads out over the swamps, and only by prompt and

vigorous measures can he escape to the higher ground upon the ranges. In such times there is no question of a half-mile road; the drover is allowed to escape by what means he may, even to the cutting of station fences and to the camping upon station grass for a period it may be of many weeks. If the drover has saved his stock, however, he is not so badly off if he lands upon a well-grassed ridge, for all the men and dogs in the world are powerless to shift him now.

For the teamsters it is not so pleasant. Most of them drive their own teams, and time is money to them, yet there they must stay till the waters go down, should the roads be altogether impassable. However, there is running parallel with most of the large river-roads an outside or flood-road following round the higher ground at the foot of the ridges and only crossing the swamps where absolutely necessary. This road is often passable when the river-road proper is not; and here it is one may see the toiling teams, sometimes with thirty or five-and-thirty bullocks or horses hitched to a single waggon, straining their gallant hearts below the whips. Now and then a struggling horse or steer will fall, only to be flogged up again with the cruel lash, and no one but the teamsters and their God know the bitterness of that river-road when the floods are down.

The mail coaches make a mighty effort to get through in these perilous times. Often the driver, quite alone, or with some timid passenger who is of no use to him, will flog his four horses into the flooded gullies, having first strapped his mail-bags on to the top of the coach and adjured his embarrassed passenger to "Sit tight!" In a moment the horses are swimming and the big lumbering coach in imminent danger of overturning, but Mulga Teddie or Warrego Mick sits upright on his box, playing the lash over his swimming leaders and shouting to the plunging wheelers; and the chances are that his pluck is rewarded and his snorting team stand with scared, bloodshot eyes and shaking, dripping flanks upon the bank, while his passenger swears by all the gods that if he escapes with his life on this occasion he will never again travel in flood-time on a river-road. Few people know the risks of the Western mail-driver. It is his boast and his pride to "come if he can," but seldom or ever do the station and township people further up the river realise the awful dangers of that midnight drive. Yet when Mick's coach looms up out of the darkness behind his glowing headlights he has a cheery greeting for everyone, and it is hard to believe that perhaps half a dozen times that night he has stood face to face with death.

The shearers of the back-country are constant wayfarers upon the river-road. One generally meets them in little companies of three or four, each leading his pack-horse, on which are fastened the tent and blankets of his gipsy household. Independent, masterful fellows are these shearers, with the heartiest contempt for the swagman who from inclination or necessity goes a-foot. The shearers as a rule scorn to beg for their food, paying their way as they go and buying provisions at the towns and station stores which, as men of a fixed and remunerative trade, they can well afford to do. Yet in the few slack months between shearings many of these men, having spent their money recklessly, are glad enough to accept a squatter's charity, and some of them will work at other occupations on station or farm; but as a rule the shearer feels that his is skilled labour, and he is rather disposed to count it a loss of prestige when he is compelled to accept work alongside of those swagmen whom he has schooled himself to despise.

There are many others well known upon the river-road which are worthy of mention in passing; the hawkers, Australian, English, Chinese or Syrian, who drive in single- or double-horsed waggons piled to the roof with goods of all kinds, sold generally at exorbitant prices, but welcome enough to men who are

far away from towns, or whose fatal drinking habits render it necessary to avoid a tour save at such times as they are prepared to take their regular holiday; the travelling saddlers, who in four- or six-horse turnouts travel round the stations at shearing time and do a lively business, for in the Bush nearly every man has a horse, and consequently a saddle or harness, which in due course needs repair; the Chinese gardeners who drive long distances into the Bush with their fruit and vegetables; and the Syrian and other foreign hawkers who carry their goods in packs upon their backs. All these are frequently met upon the river-roads.

In the Bourke district, and away beyond it over the border to Eulo and Cunnamulla, a common sight nowadays is a long string of camels laden with wool for the railway or stores for the far back-stations. A grotesque sight they are with their long necks bobbing up and down, "like a basketful of snakes," as Mr Kipling has graphically described it. They cover long distances in the day, and I have been shown a camel which has several times been ridden over a hundred miles in twelve hours. This is, of course, a riding-camel and his pace is a fast shuffling trot; the pack camels go much slower, about the pace of an average horse's walk. The Bush horses

are, or at least used to be, very frightened of them, and at the first taint of camels on the wind would become almost unmanageable. They walk in single file, each camel fastened by a string tied to a peg in the nose to the one immediately in front of him, and two or three Afghan drivers will manage a score or more of them. When they camp at night the saddles and loads are lifted off in one piece by three or four men, which prevents waste of time in balancing and strapping the loads afresh each day. Each camel can carry five to seven hundredweight; but owing to the awkward nature of the loads, such as bales of wool, sawn timber and iron tanks, the poor beasts suffer cruelly from sore backs, a matter to which their drivers seem completely indifferent.

The road itself runs from point to point, cutting off the river bends, which in some cases are miles across. As I have said above, the road for stock is half a mile wide, but the vehicles, where no detours are necessary owing to flooded grounds, only make use of a strip some hundred yards or so broad. This is cut up in every direction by the heavy traffic, and deep ruts bury the huge waggons to the axles; even a light buggy can only be drawn, with any comfort to its passengers, in the manner called in the Bush *straddling the track*, that is to say, driving each one of the

pair of horses, or each two of the four, on a separate side of one of the deep ruts. This ensures for the wheels a comparatively even surface; of course it is impossible should one be driving a single horse. Under any conditions, driving upon a river-road, either in summer dust or winter mud, is far from a pleasure; and the average bushman prefers to throw the long miles behind him on an easy hack rather than be jolted to pieces on irresponsible springs.

The scenery of these roads does not vary much, and in England would not be ranked as scenery at all. In all the districts I have named the ground is flat and uninteresting, and one may travel many miles with no more change than is offered by the variation of sandhill and plain, of red soil and black, of scrub and open country. Some of the Macquarie bends, however, are pretty, for this is a river that runs between high, timbered banks, and her giant gum trees and feathery river oaks make up a pleasing foreground. Along the Darling and the Lachlan there is also heavy gum timber, but the rivers themselves are uninteresting and unattractive, being very tortuous and, in the case of the latter, full of dead timber and fallen trees. The Lachlan and Macquarie are unnavigable, but the Darling, and of course the Murray, can be navigated for hundreds of miles, and

the shrill whistle of the river-steamers is a familiar sound on the roads that run abreast of them.

It would be impossible to dismiss the subject of the river-roads without alluding to the wayside shanties and hotels which are such a familiar feature. Though dignified with the title of hotels, in most cases this is a mere travesty of the name. A great many of them were never intended to be managed for the convenience and comfort of the travelling public, but were built solely with a view to enticing the shearer or Bush labourer passing with his wages to come and drink himself to stupor in their dirty precincts. And in this, I regret to say, they are too often successful. The average Bush inn is nothing but a trap for these unfortunates; the traveller who demands a night's lodgings, merely because he finds himself at too great a distance from the next town or station, is not in the least welcome unless he spends his money freely in the bar on drinks for any lazy loafers who may happen to be on the premises. Drunken men are often robbed in these vile dens, and many a sober, industrious fellow has been beguiled into taking a single drink which has been carefully drugged, and has had the greatest difficulty in escaping with any of his money, and indeed in some cases with his life. Of course there are many clean,

homely little hostels which travellers on the Western roads could name, but as a rule the Bush hotels bear an unenviable reputation.

Looking back dispassionately upon dusty days and starry nights spent upon the river-roads, allowing for all their sin and sorrow, their hours of anxiety and sleepless care, I can yet say with the utmost truth that there is a charm about them for which one looks in vain in the narrow streets and roads of civilisation; and the heart of a rover turns incessantly to the ripple of the horse-bells and the gleam of the red camp-fires, and to the toiling overlanders who ride with oath and jest upon the Open Road.

IN AMERICA



BRITISH AND AMERICAN FARMING

AMERICA is a great country and its methods are most thorough. When it chooses a field for its overflowing industry and energy it chooses it wide and long, and toils in it brightly, conscientiously and whole-heartedly. When it takes up a subject it pounds it and prods it and turns it over and over, and when it has worried it and flung it aside it is a clean bone and there is nothing left on it for anyone else to acquire. At the present time there are few subjects which are absorbing more of its attention than that of agriculture.

Think of the vast hosts of men, from the Secretary of Agriculture in his easy-chair at Washington down to the humble hog-feeder swinging upon the gate of an Iowa pig-pen, who are interested directly and indirectly in this great and far-reaching industry. Not a single one of the stock trains roaring down the grades of Illinois or slipping over the prairies of Nebraska but runs in the shackles of the Western farm! Not an editor of the many thousands who rule the destinies of our agricultural journals but is bound to his roll-top desk by the ropes of ranch and

corral! Not a live-stock commission agent, not a real estate man, not an auctioneer, packer, horse-dealer or veterinary surgeon but runs in the shafts of agricultural expediency, on the bar-bit of market fluctuation, under the whip of season and opportunity! Give the railway magnates their position, and the steel men their power, and the oil men their dividends—on a surer, more lasting foundation, with their hands crossed and their hearts one in the interests of the greatest agricultural nation in the world, stand the farmers and landowners of America, the brawn and sinew of that myriad-acred territory!

In the older lands of Europe a score of reasons influence the farmer in his choice of occupation. In the British Isles as many farm for pleasure as for profit, content to put up with small returns in money for the advantages that go hand-in-hand with country life. In America the farmer farms for what profit he can make out of the business. He stays only where he can make money and get swift and sure returns for his capital invested. He does not build massive stone houses and barns and stables like his cousin across the water—structures to stand for all time and make moss-covered mock at eternity. He nails up a few hasty slabs and paints them red or yellow—that is his barn. He

piles up a few logs, planes a few boards, or splashes a little mud over boughs—that is his house. When seasons are bad he casts about for a region that will suit him better and treat him more fairly. He bundles the wife and the children and the household goods into the waggon and starts for the railway station or the overland trail, leaving forever the rich black loam of Iowa for the grey-red soil of Colorado or elsewhere, and he leaves, possibly, with little regret. He has not lived long enough in the home of his fathers to feel bound to the farm by any ties of sentiment or affection.

Over in England and Scotland we have suffered and rejoiced, cursed and been cheerful, basked in the sunlight and shivered in the cold, for so many generations on the old farm that we have come to love every stick in its straggling fences, every slate on its weather-worn roofs. We would be content to lose a great deal of money on it, to stand almost any oppression on its behalf, to let it starve us and rob us and sour us, before we would leave it for another. It was our grandfather's, it was our father's, it is ours, it will be our son's. Could we less than love it?

On our side of the Atlantic we allow considerations of sentiment, of sport, of health, of en-

joyment and of environment to influence us in our choice of a farm, and our desire to stand by it to the last, and hand it over—a doubly advantageous heritage—to those who will come after us. Yet the farming of America yields nothing to that of Britain in intensity. The American farmer may change his location frequently and on slight pretext, but while engaged in tilling the soil of one particular section he tills it deeply and truly. He disregards the mere surface adornment of neat fences and carefully-tended gardens, and of well-arranged cottages for his workmen, but he spares no labour to run his furrows deep, to do all that is possible to aid Nature in her travail and to claim from the generous earth full measure of her yearly gift.

The British farmer is generally somewhat ahead of his means; the American farmer frequently has more in hand than the casual observer would be prone to imagine. In England you stand and gaze over a beautifully-trimmed hedge on to a neatly-kept grass lawn running up in a riot of flower-beds to the warm grey stone of the farmhouse walls. You gaze, and you say: "This is a well-to-do yeoman indeed; here reigns prosperity, if ever prosperity be." Often you are wrong. The clean green lawn and the solid masonry and the trimmed thorn

hedge only serve to hide the torn banners of a forlorn hope, the broken toys of a losing game. The British farmer is splendid in his defeat, rich in the pride that will not be crushed, arrogant even in the impotence of downfall. He commands our respect and admiration. His windows flaunt their rich venetian blinds towards the roadway; his bull-dog, resplendent in spiked collar of brass, rushes aggressively to meet the stranger. The English farmer's house may be a pitiful cradle of poverty, but to the world and to himself it is his castle still, and at its porch he stands, true knight of old romance, to hold its honour clean before them all.

In America how different! Over a tangled and broken barb-wire fence (I am contrasting extremes, not including all American farms) you look across a rough grass plot, furrowed and uprooted by the swine, to a dirt-splashed, unpainted wooden wall. A few draggled hens fight for the scraps of the mid-day meal, and a black boar turns twinkling, inquisitive eyes upon the stranger. You gaze, and guess! You say to yourself: "This is a poor man's province; he has trouble in finding the necessities of life; he has no leisure or opportunity to attend to his fences. Give him time; he will dig his garden and trim his lawn when he has been longer here." Wrong

again! This is an old settler and a rich man. Only last week he completed arrangements for the purchase of a Nebraska ranch in addition to his valuable acres in the corn-belt. Only yesterday four waggon-loads of market-topping steers from his farm went down the North-Western railroad to Chicago.

Doing everything with a will, in the manner that has come to be recognised as typically American, the farmer of the United States is one of the hardest workers in the world. The better-class English farmer, whether seasons be good or ill, grows jolly and fat in his congenial occupation. He grumbles a good deal, but soon forgets his troubles over a flagon of ale or a glass of port, or in the heat and hurry of a flying forty minutes with the foxhounds. He "manages" his farm from a pinnacle of social superiority, ruling over a half-dozen careful and conscientious labourers, whose interest in the property is no less than his own. The American, on the other hand, lean, cadaverous, energetic, clad in blue jeans, spitting tobacco juice to the four winds of heaven, smutted with the grime of his engines, and coated with the grease of his machinery, toils closely and intimately on the soil, leading, with indomitable personal energy, a couple of unreliable, irresponsible hired hands—

suspicious of condescension, impatient of advice and control. He works long hours and works with a savage energy, tearing up the rich brown earth for its treasure, draining the wet lands and irrigating the dry, himself always a leader, Labour personified and glorified. "Forward and upward" is the motto written with his ploughshare on the green banner of his pasture; he is frankly eager, openly impatient, splendidly in earnest. He must have the lightest machines, the latest labour-saving appliances, the quickest-stepping horses; no work is too hard or heavy for him if, in the interests of his prosperity and progress, it is work to be done.

The British farmer plods slowly and deliberately along the roads to failure or success, turning now to the right and now to the left, to pluck a flower of leisure or chase a butterfly of sport. The American, with head bent down to the path, hurries fiercely forward to the dim indefinite goal of wealth acquired and leisure won. He has no time for flowers and butterflies. The American farmer, often illiterate and slow of thought, reads with conscientious care every word in a half-dozen farm papers to which he subscribes. The British farmer takes a local weekly and a red-covered sporting journal, and looks with contempt upon the newspaper articles of agricultural

writers—as a rule. The American sends for the bulletins of the state experiment stations and reads them eagerly, hoping ever to find in them some new thought that he may absorb and so outstrip his neighbours in the race for gold. The jolly Englishman laughs at the idea of any college professor, however astute and able, being in a position to dictate to him on a subject the theory and practice of which he has absorbed as a heritage from sire and grandsire.

So each in his different way passes along the broad road of agricultural practice towards the distant goal, one sturdy in the hide-bound beliefs of ancient tradition, the other strong in the over-confidence of present toil and future progress. Both, as it may be, somewhat in fault; but both, as the wide world admits, greatly to be admired.

THE GOSPEL TRAIN

AMONG the many different means employed by those interested in disseminating agricultural instruction among the farmers of the United States there is none more enterprising or original than that which is familiarly known as the "Gospel Train." At some of the leading agricultural colleges the more earnest of the expert workers had come to bemoan their limitations in the matter of spreading certain truths in corn-growing which, had they been widely circulated, these men felt confident would have done much towards the economic advance of arable farming in those states in which they were particularly interested. They had done all that it seemed to them possible to do in the way of writing articles in the agricultural Press, and inviting and answering questions in the correspondence columns of those papers which devoted themselves especially to the interests of the farmer. They had missed no opportunities of fulfilling lecturing engagements at county clubs and farmers' institutes, travelling great distances—often at much personal inconvenience—in the intervals of their own absorbing

college work, to impress their theories, widely becoming well-proven facts, upon the more illiterate, but no less enthusiastic, men who have of late years looked to them for guidance. In addition to this they had caused to be distributed from their own colleges a considerable amount of agricultural literature in pamphlet form, detailing their daily observations and constant research both in the laboratory and in the field. All this they had done; and still in the breasts of many of them rankled the consciousness of a work not to the uttermost performed, of a constituency not fully converted, of high ideals of usefulness not fully attained. There must be some further way, they argued, of bringing this gospel, which was theirs to preach, within reach of the many thousands of farmers who were waiting in unanimity of eagerness and enthusiasm to accept the truth from their lightest word.

A couple of years ago these lofty and ambitious desires bore fruit in the state of Iowa, the greatest corn-growing state in the Union, in the fitting out of a *corn train*. (In speaking of corn it is well to note that *corn* in America always means maize or Indian corn, the term *grain* being used in referring to wheat, oats, barley, etc.) It is not absolutely on record that Iowa was the first state to affect the Gospel Train—

the honour is sometimes claimed by the neighbouring state of Illinois, also a prominent corn district—but in any case Iowa was the first to run a Corn train over a distance of thousands of miles into the remotest corners of her mighty territory, and the first to bring them into that complete and satisfactory state of organisation which has made the scheme a memorable and effective one.

In the history of practical science to which our progressive American cousins have reduced—or, rather, elevated—the business of farming, the tendency has been more and more to develop the specialist, the professor of soils, the master of sheep husbandry, the expert in hogs, the expert in oats, and so on. Professor Holden is a specialist, and his speciality is corn. His colleagues have playfully prophesied that when he dies the word *corn* will be found graven upon his heart. It is corn that has carried his name to the furthest boundaries of Iowa, and far beyond them. In Ohio, in Illinois, in Nebraska, in Kentucky, this expert's name is a household word, simply because these states are corn states, and wherever corn is known there is Professor Holden known too, if not in person at least by reputation and authority.

At the Iowa State College of Agriculture, which

is looked up to, not only locally but nationally, and in the world's eyes, as a leader in all things pertaining to the science of the farmer's profession, P. G. Holden, Vice-Dean of Agriculture and Head of the Department of Agronomy in that institution, is one of the most prominent men. Capable, energetic, daring in resource, aggressive yet cautious, this man is a good type of the class that is doing so much to make the American farmer in method the most serious, in result the most successful, in the known world. Personally he is an instance of the success that comes of following up without any deviation one particular idea, owning one speciality, being master—and thorough master—of one particular subject. For some years this earnest and useful member of the inner circle of American agriculture has devoted his time and attention to one particular branch of his own particular work. With other experts in maize culture he has long been of opinion that a conscientious and rational system of seed selection was the only means by which the corn crop of the state could be rapidly and permanently improved. For this careful selection of seed corn he has long pleaded not only in his own class-room but upon the public platform and in the public Press. He has compiled at considerable expense of time

and labour, and with infinite care, a pamphlet dealing exhaustively with this important subject in all its phases, showing by letterpress and copious illustration exactly the procedure to be followed in the successful selection of seed corn. This pamphlet has been issued as an ordinary bulletin by the experiment station of the Iowa State College. Some 50,000 copies have already been distributed among the farmers of the state, and the demand for the work is constant as each fresh seed-time arrives.

It has been said that a man deserves well of his country if he has succeeded in making two blades of grass grow where one grew before, and, if this is so, Professor Holden of Iowa surely deserves well of his state, for it is estimated that in the last two or three years he has by his teaching improved both the quantity and quality of Iowa corn to the value of some millions of dollars. Be this as it may, Professor Holden's name will always be inseparably connected with the newest departure in American agricultural methods—the organisation and successful running of the Gospel Train—for it was to propound to the people this professor's theories of seed selection that the railway train as a lecture-room was first exploited in Iowa.

In considering the necessities which arise for such means of getting in closer touch with the farmers, we must remember that one of these huge states will contain from 250,000 to 300,000 farmers, for the most part men, of ambitious and enthusiastic temperament, who clamour for more assistance than one agricultural college, however well organised and capably manned, can possibly give them.

The most that such a college can do is to take and educate a percentage—an absurdly small percentage—of these farmers' sons, to give these farmers themselves, if they can spare the time and money to travel some hundreds of miles to the college itself, a short course of two weeks of instruction in the year, and to send out experts whenever possible to lecture at farmers' clubs and institutes. It stands to reason that even these progressive methods leave a very large proportion of the rural population unapproached and untouched. Yet these men in the far-off corners of the state are just as anxious as their more fortunately-situated neighbours to have the gospel of progress preached to them, and in Iowa the Corn train has solved the difficulty.

It does not transpire who was the brilliant originator of this idea of travelling through the country by special train to lecture to the farmers of remote

districts, but the college authorities took it up at once with enthusiasm. Three of the prominent railway companies, whether from public spirit or a far-seeing policy guided by the prospect of future carriage receipts increasing with an increasing corn crop, offered to put special trains at the disposal of the college men, trains which would stop at every single station upon their lines, thus giving every farmer a chance to come and hear for himself, in the words of their strongest advocate, the details of methods of which he had only heard a faint murmur from the outside world. A party of corn experts, consisting of Professor Holden himself, a sub-professor, and a couple of graduate students, was soon formed. A director of the railway company, a couple of journalists and a cook, made up, with the train attendants, the little band which went out to spread the gospel of good seed corn in this original and novel manner.

A programme was quickly arranged, and large bills were printed and exposed at the country stations, setting forth the plan of the route and the exact minute at which the train would draw up at the platform. The farmers were requested to make an effort to come to their railway town on that particular day, and loyally they responded to the appeal. Each

town as it was reached disclosed the same apparently endless row of farm waggons and buggies, and horses hitched to posts at the side of the long main street, while their owners thronged the town hall or the platform of the railway station to await the coming of the Gospel Train.

If the town was one of some size and importance the meeting was held in the public hall or the Farmers' Institute. If it was small and unimportant, or merely a wayside platform in the wilderness, the lecture was given in the train itself. For this purpose a long corridor train was used, which would seat eighty to a hundred men—this being ample accommodation for the small numbers which came to any of the smaller stations. As the train drew up the farmers on the platform were ushered into this carriage, Professor Holden or one of his assistants would lecture for twenty minutes—which was the limit of time allotted—the farmers would file out, and promptly on time the Gospel Train would get up steam and whirl away its little band of agricultural enthusiasts to the next station, where already the platform was filled with a waiting crowd of eager-faced boys and men, who hailed with a cheer the train as it drew up to repeat the programme of the last stopping-place. The trains were run with

most commendable promptitude, and in no case were the farmers either disappointed of an appearance or wearied by a long wait. The interest displayed at every point of the route was a thing to remember; there were no doubting faces and no cynical ones. If there was a humorous side to this hasty and typically American manner of tossing crumbs of agricultural information to the state in the twenty minutes' pauses of a hurried railway journey, no one present seemed to appreciate it. Every meeting, whether in town hall or railway carriage, went off with absolute decorum and concentrated earnestness of attention, and the Professor and his assistants came in for much appreciation and thanks, personally delivered whenever time permitted.

An educational sally of this kind ventured in our solid, settled islands would arouse only antagonism and open ridicule—one cannot imagine it being attempted at all; but in America it seemed to suggest nothing incongruous or superficial—simply a brave effort on the part of a few determinedly enthusiastic College men to sow as much good seed, literally and figuratively, as possible in the two short weeks at their disposal.

The agricultural and city Press lent their powerful aid to the movement; other railway companies came

forward with the offer of special trains, and everywhere the startling innovation met with the greatest success.

The most telling proof of the popularity of the movement was to be found in the large numbers of farmers who at all points availed themselves of this opportunity to hear expert opinion on a matter closely concerned with their daily interests and commercial prosperity. There may have been—undoubtedly there were—some few who were too bigoted and self-opinionated to think it worth while to take any hints from specialists who had made the growing of corn their life's study, but these men were not in evidence in the crowded town halls, where the Stars and Stripes flanked the huge maps and diagrams of good and bad seed corn upon which Professor Holden pointed out his obvious moral; nor were their faces to be seen among those eager ones in the long railway carriage, fixed with such keen interest upon the man who was holding their attention with every word he spoke.

That the Corn train had done its work well as a pioneer was soon proved by the urgent demand for a Dairy train, which immediately followed. This was conceded, and its success led to the sending out of a Good Roads train, in which a number of experts

preached towards the improvement of the highways. Generally speaking, this novel way of reaching the outlying farmers is ensured of continual success, and in the educational economy of American agriculture the Gospel Train has undoubtedly come to stay.

THE MOUNTAIN FARMS OF COLORADO

IT would seem as one first approaches the Rocky Mountains that the outward line of them presents a barrier to all but the most intrepid explorer or hunter. It is hard to believe that beyond that first forbidding rampart the snow-streams flow down into fertile open valleys, where not so many years ago deer and buffalo in immense herds roamed under the sheltering bulwarks of the mountain walls.

It did not take long for the white man, the pioneer moving westward to the Pacific slope, to find out the value of the lower hills for grazing and of the river-flats for an agriculture suited to the soil and seasons.

The climate was superb, the sheltered valleys gave sufficient protection in winter to the herds that in summer roamed upon the range, and there was water and enough in the swiftly-running rivers to supply the needs of the cattle "on a thousand hills," in addition to that which was afforded by the mountain springs. Then the one drawback made itself evident. The rainfall was insignificant and ill-adapted to the regular growing of crops, even to those which avowedly required comparatively little moisture.

Then the pioneer looked to the arid flats, and beyond them to the clear swift flow of the streams tumbling down by cliff and cañon to the Colorado river and the sea.

It required no trained engineer's brain to grasp the fact that by cutting ditches from the higher ground which the hill streams traversed every river-flat might be irrigated, and not only every flat but every table-land and plateau near the river level.

Out went our pioneer with plough and scoop and spade, ran his ditches and cross-ditches, built his flumes and dams, and listened in triumph to the soft whisper of the water as it followed him home, gurgling down through his pastures and bringing new life as it came, and opening up new possibilities. It sounds an easy thing to ditch a passage for water that is only waiting to be loosed from the high ground to the low, but in reality there is much hard work to be overcome. Apart from the actual toil of plough and scoop and the shiftings of many tons of earth as the work proceeds, there are the disappointments inseparable from all great undertakings, the mistakes in calculation of level, the subsidence of the bottom, the bursting of the banks—all inevitable and to be taken into consideration. But the pioneers persevered, as pioneers will, and to-day a thousand

blossoming fields of alfalfa and clover, of swaying grain and grasses, bear eternal testimony to the determination and ingenuity of the men who blazed the track for the rest. Now there are ditches running, in some instances, for twenty miles, and every year sees many more acres won from the wilderness and plough and planted.

The homes of the mountain farmers vary from the almost palatial residence of the wealthy rancher to the log-cabin and dug-out of the struggling first-year settler. Some of the well-to-do farmers have built substantial houses with an eye to comfort, have introduced into them all modern conveniences, and have used taste and discretion in their furnishings and appointments.

The fields and pastures are generally fenced with posts of the mountain cedar, but as these are simply chopped into suitable lengths for carting down from the hills, without any due regard for symmetry of appearance, the general effect of a row of such posts, all varying in height, is ragged and the reverse of orderly.

Everywhere the pitiless and unnecessary barb wire is used, and the farmers daily risk the lives of valuable stock in this abominable invention. On nearly every farm and ranch you may see some crippled

victim of its use, and the horses one sees disfigured permanently by wire cuts may be numbered by scores.

It is claimed generally throughout America that barbed wire is necessary to hold cattle. This is a fallacy, as the writer has seen much wilder cattle than either the milk-cows of the Middle West or the hay-fed mountain steers easily kept in check by ordinary plain wire fences of five or six wires. On the other hand, if cattle are confirmed fence-breakers—and many through being tempted by bad fences are so—they will go through wire, either barb or plain, as though it were brown paper.

The cattle on the mountain farms are of a fine stamp, and one is constantly surprised by seeing at the noon-day camps around the licks and springs a type of animal very far above what one would expect to see running loose and apparently uncared for in the roughest of mountain country. The courage and discrimination of some of the leading stockmen in going to Europe and to the best herds of America for their herd-bulls is making a very perceptible difference in the quality of the range cattle. These cattle run on the high ground all summer on a common pasture, watched with more or less zealous care by the cow-boy riders of the different farms. Before

winter they are gathered from the hills and sorted out by their owners, each of whom takes his bunch down to the low ground and feeds them on lucerne or native hay during the hard weather; this is an extensive business on the larger ranches, where, in some instances, two or three thousand acres of hay are cut every year. The cattle on the best-improved ranches are fed in large corrals and covered sheds; on the smaller farms they are turned into sheltered pastures, where often the water-worn gullies afford a protection as complete as man himself could devise.

So severe are the winters up on the high lands that the stockmen say that if by chance a few head of cattle are missed in the autumn round-up the chances of their surviving the cold weather are very small, though occasionally the spring discloses some solitary beast, shaggy-coated and emaciated, that has defied the season's worst.

The horses in the mountains are almost invariably good, for the farmers have long since found that it costs no more to keep a good team than a bad one, and in the hills a good saddle horse is invaluable. Some of the horses—notably those owned by Baer Bros. and Cary Bros.—would compare favourably with any to be seen in our larger cities, and some of the finest stallions, of all breeds, to be found in

America to-day are standing in the modest horse-barns under the shadow of the giant peaks of the Rockies.

The mountain farmers are an industrious class. They know the value of their splendid land and they spare no effort to take the best out of it. Perhaps they have some advantage in being apart from the average distractions that lure a man at times from his work. Their towns are few and far between, and afford but little inducement for the idle pleasures of the more densely-populated districts. The fresh, clean mountain air discourages lethargy and spurs always to constant effort, the mountain peaks point always to the highest, and the song of the snow-water as it hustles down through the ditches is a constant reminder of duty that waits to be done.

But on occasion the mountain farmer makes holiday, riding down to his post-town in all the glory of high-cantled saddle and big-rowelled spurs to see a race-meeting or a broncho-busting contest. With a rifle and fishing-rod at hand he has sport always at his door, for a basket of spotted mountain trout can be taken before breakfast and a deer shot and dressed at dawn.

There is a day coming when, with railways through the mountain ranges and these rich western valleys

accessible from every side, the mountain farmer of Colorado will be the envy of the world. Meanwhile his prototype toils on, unknown, indomitable, thorough, building deeply and well the foundation of a splendid future for the man who comes after him.

THE AGRICULTURAL PRESS OF AMERICA

IN the marvellously rapid development of agriculture in the United States there is no more important factor than the Press, and the agricultural journals of America have a more reaching influence than those of any other country.

The American farmer is a favoured individual. The Senate and the Local State Legislature vie with one another in making laws and appropriations that shall advance his interests; fully-equipped colleges are maintained at public expense to help him along the thorny road of venturous experiment; above all, he has the support and encouragement of an able and outspoken Press, which has always the power to make or mar an industry such as his.

It was inevitable, in a country where the farmer and his interests are of such admitted importance, that a strong and influential agricultural Press should evolve itself on his behalf, and now it stands the most notable institution of its kind in any country, and the strongest lever in the American farmer's notable success.

In Britain many of our farmers are inclined to be scornfully independent of the agricultural journals and their writers. They may admit that a farm paper has some usefulness in the capacity of a chronicle of what has recently taken place in agricultural circles and as an indicator of what is likely to take place in the near future, but as commentator and instructor comparatively few of our older practical farmers will attach to it supreme importance.

Conditions in the two countries are vastly different, and until we thoroughly understand these conditions it is impossible for us to appreciate the power which is wielded by the agricultural Press of America.

First of all it is necessary for us to remember that the immense scope of country over which the American farmers are scattered makes it almost inevitable that they shall look to some such connecting factor as the Press for that centralisation and general understanding which is indispensable in every great industry or business whose principals are scattered units. Also the difference in national character is very strongly marked, and if the American farmer lacks a very great many of the virtues which the British yeoman possesses, he at any-

rate is happily without the latter's dogged insular prejudice. His agricultural newspapers are more intimate, more personal, more attentive to the auxiliaries and side issues of their subject than the British journal of the same type has ever been or is ever likely to be. The attitude of the farmers themselves is entirely different; they depend upon their farm journals to an extent unknown in the British Islands. They look to them not only for reports of agricultural happenings, local and national, but for comments upon those happenings, and for instruction in all things pertaining to their calling. And, on the whole, one may say their confidence is not abused; an army of really practical men, who are also capable writers, minister to their needs every week in the columns of a large number of papers which make farming their main if not their only interest.

These papers naturally vary in value and influence. The great and remunerative field which agricultural economy presents to the journalist has been fully exploited by him, and many men have come forward, on a business venture with money-making intent, who are obviously unfit to act as guides and instructors to an agricultural community, which is all too ready to accept as

infallible any writer who has entrance to the columns of a well-advertised and successful farm journal. But, on the whole, the tone of the American farm paper is elevating and its influence helpful and far-reaching. It is well that we can say so much, for in no other country is so great a dependence set upon these papers or so heavy a responsibility laid upon their editors and contributors.

Much of the confidence reposed in these men may be traced to the fact that they are in many cases graduates of the Agricultural Colleges and are known to be so by the farmers. The man on the land trusts his State College because of the help he has acquired from it in the past, and he trusts his farm journal's editor because he knows that he is a man college-trained and imbued with high ideals of agricultural efficiency; and he knows further that the outlook of the editor's chair is the outlook of the class-room desk and that it is sound and true.

Not all editors are college men, but by far the majority of those whose papers have the confidence of the thoughtful farmers are so.

It is a question how many farmers there are in Britain who seriously allow themselves to be influenced in matters either great or small by the leading articles of their favourite farm journal. In America there

are many thousands of men who place the utmost dependence upon similar articles. The reason is self-evident. In the United States the agriculturist is faced with new problems, new difficulties, new developments. His land is comparatively untested, its depth of possibility unplumbed, its fullest resources still unguessed. The scientist is even now experimenting daily in every part of it, and the message of the scientist is conveyed through the columns of the agricultural Press. In the British Isles our land has been under cultivation for many hundreds of years; our farmers are treading a path of which they are sure; they will farm their land as their fathers farmed it before them; the scientist has a message for only a relatively limited number of them—a certain progressive and liberal-minded few.

The agricultural editor then is sure of a hearing from the American farmer and ranchman. It is interesting to review the uses which he has made of his opportunities. Among the many thousands of farm papers which are scattered through the length and breadth of the States are one or two of proved merit and world-wide fame. The influence wielded by a paper such as the *Breeders' Gazette* is as wide as the bounds of America itself, and is not unfelt across the seas. The short leading articles of

this excellent stock weekly are "leaders" in every sense of the word. To cut them out and collect them would be to have in one's possession a record of the agricultural progress of America from week to week. No subject of state, inter-state, national or international importance is overlooked if it influences or affects in the slightest degree the pastoral or stockbreeding interests of the *Gazette's* half-million readers. The writers are the best that tact and money can command, and a feature of the paper is the full and detailed answers given every week to inquirers on every subject connected with stock. These answers are compiled by the greatest agricultural scientists and practical experimentalists of the day, are, of course, widely read, and do more towards shaping the methods of breeders and feeders on the American farms than the casual outsider would guess.

The leading articles are mainly from the clever and, when necessary, biting pen of the editor, Alvin Sanders, whose fine book on shorthorn cattle has already made all interested in that breed his life-long debtors. Good as the *Breeders' Gazette* is in the usual issues, the editor surpasses himself in an annual Christmas number, which, for wealth of photographic illustration, for literary quality

and cosmopolitan stock interest, is surpassed by nothing of its kind in the world. There are one or two other farm journals which keep up a high level both of literary and practical advice. Among them may be named *Wallace's Farmer*, the *Iowa Homestead*, *Country Life in America*, and the *Twentieth Century Farmer*. These are edited by practical men; in more than one case by men who themselves have farms, and who from day to day are encountering the same problems, facing the same failures and achieving the same successes as the men for whom they write. The farmers accept without reserve what they find in these columns; they are loyal to their chosen journal, and the journal in its turn is compiled with a view to conferring real benefit upon its readers.

After the weekly papers which I have named, and a few others which may be accounted leaders in things agricultural, there is a very large number of less pretentious publications which, in a quiet yet deliberate way, are doing much to forward the interests of the farming community. They may lack something in literary finish, but they hold a great deal of common sense and practical information, and are superlatively useful in dealing at greater length with subjects too distinctly local for the attention of

the larger journals. After these, again, one will find a considerable number of publications which do more harm than good, papers which are run by ambitious city men, utterly ignorant of the requirements of a farming constituency, but tempted to give their organs a name which will attract the tillers of the soil. Such men are in the field only to make profit for themselves and have no journalistic ideals; they lack the sentiment and sympathy which has made their contemporaries a power in agricultural America. The danger lies in the fact that the indiscriminating section of the more ignorant farmers accept their opinions and advice as readily as the better informed accept those of the leading journals.

There is no question of lack of support for these papers; on the contrary the agricultural population is too ready to be duped and led astray by the unscrupulous agricultural editor and advertiser who has an axe of his own to grind. In America advertising is carried to extravagant lengths. In the cities every one must advertise or drop out of the strenuous struggle for commercial existence. In the country conditions are scarcely different. Not only are the farm papers full of the business notices of auctioneers, implement makers, stallion proprietors and quack medicine men—they teem

with the advertisements of the farmer himself. The British yeoman makes little or no use of his farm journal to advertise his wares, being content to bring them forward in the Corn Exchange or in the open market and sell them on their merits. The American husbandman, on the other hand, if he has only half a dozen hens to dispose of, claims considerable space in his agricultural weekly to enlarge upon the virtues of their laying capability and the soundness of their pedigree. Not only are the sales of well-known thoroughbred stock advertised in the leading journals, but every farmer giving up his farm—and the name of these is legion, for the tendency to hold a piece of land for only a month or two is notorious—finds it necessary to proclaim the fact to the farthest corners of his State and beyond it. Sales which in England would merely be notified within a ten-mile radius by an auctioneer's leaflet and the gossip of the market-place are in America advertised in papers widely read over a territory of many thousand square miles.

We may look upon advertising, then, in its various phases as one of the principal reasons for the existence and the phenomenal success of so many quite satisfactory farm papers. It is also responsible in a great degree for the many undesir-

able publications which have crept in among the rest.

Agricultural editors in the United States differ widely in their manner of appealing to the farming public. With some of them it is an accepted axiom that the farmer's paper must also be a newspaper, and that the countryman prefers to take but one publication and to find in it not only chronicle and comment regarding the agricultural progress of the week, but also the current general news of the district and of the outside world. It is questionable, however, if the papers framed on these lines have had most success. The farmer appears rather to favour the stock journal which devotes itself entirely to the business in hand, while he takes in addition a good daily paper from the city. There is no doubt, however, of the successful appeal of the "family" farm paper—the one which runs a woman's page and a children's column in addition to its sterner business section.

In the eagerness of the American farmer for information regarding his profession and the part that his neighbour is playing in that profession lies the chief danger to the future agricultural journalism of the United States. Appreciating this fact, the colleges are beginning to see the necessity of keeping

the tone of the farm journals on a high level if their own strenuous work is not to be combated and undone. With this intention in view one at least of the more prominent institutions has added to its curriculum a course of instruction in Agricultural Journalism which bids fair to be immensely popular with the students and conspicuously successful in its far-reaching results.

The agricultural editor and Press writer of the near future must be—not in the isolated cases of a few leading journals but in every case—a man of the highest ideals combined with the soundest practical knowledge and deepest sympathy with his subject. The journalist with an agricultural college training will be such a man, and when the time comes that he is looked upon as the only fully-qualified and rightful occupant of the editorial chair, then will the power of America's agricultural Press be, if possible, even greater than it is to-day.

HERE AND THERE

THE BLOOD OF THE DESERT

“ I watch you go whinnying past me,
And memories come with a whirl
Of reckless wild rides with a comrade,
And laughing gay rides with a girl.”

The Pearl of Them All.

DID you ever have the good fortune, I wonder, to own an Arab horse, or one with a strong dash of Arab blood in him? If you have done so you know his worth better than I can tell you. But if not, let me say that you have fallen short of learning the possibilities of equine excellence raised to its highest power. You may have ridden some good horses, but the Arab is a thing apart, for in his veins runs the royal blood of a line of kings—the matchless blood of the desert!

The owner of race-horses does not value it; it does not add to the pace of the money-making machines which week after week are flogged round the circular tracks to make a gambler's holiday. The owner of the trotting horse has no need of it, for this is not the blood that goes in shafts and bands to clip the records of the track. But the true horse-

lover wants it every time and always; because it is the warm, generous fire in the veins that makes for stamina and constancy and close comradeship. It lights the red glow in honest, eager eyes, it smoothes the symmetry of shoulder and crest and slender steel-set limbs, and it lifts the note of human appeal in the gentle whinny that answers the caress.

The blood of the desert!

I have ridden across the inland plains of Australia on a certain favourite Arab horse; the wind-blown sand was there, the blue dancing mirage, and the little green islands, oases in the wilderness, maybe a mile apart. I have laid my hand on the muscular arch of his grey neck and have dreamed that I was riding a day's march out of Babylon; and every stroke of the white feet in the tireless gallop, and every snort of the red-lined nostrils as the good beast blew the dust aside, heightened the illusion and deepened the dream. I have fastened the hobbles on him at night and turned him out to forage in the blue-grass, when the stars shone down through gum trees that might have been palms, and he whinnied to his mates just as the proud grey stallions, his fathers, a thousand years ago may have whinnied to the desert mares while their bearded Arab masters slept, tired, among their tents.

The blood of the desert!

It is the clean, pure blood of the noblest animal that God has given us for our help and comradeship. It is the unmingled, unalloyed vein-fire of the aristocrats of the plains. And so it has always seemed to me that the Arab and the Arab-blooded horses should never be degraded to the uses of the sordid money-makers of the world; the man that would raise a whip or drive home a spur on such a one insults the dauntless courage of the breed, for the Arab horse falters only when exhausted, and struggles gamely to the end, gallant and resolute to his last stride.

Our thoroughbred horses are all descended from Arab stallions, so people say; but some of them have descended to the lowest depths and the uttermost limits; it is only very occasionally we find a breeder of horses who, wise in his generation, insists on obtaining at any cost a fresh infusion of the priceless blood royal of Arabia. Then in a few rare instances we find that the purple saddle-cloth of ancestral merit has fallen upon some favoured steed. We ride him—a royal privilege—ride him fast and ride him far. Behind him our companions on their tried old favourites drop backward one by one, but the further we go the gayer becomes the dancing step of our scion

of the desert chiefs. The red light kindles in his anxious, resolute eye; it is the light of battle, the love of speed, the pride and power of pre-eminent endurance, the badge of irreproachable courage. Every jaunty flash of his white hoofs, every sweep of his blown white forelock, is a menace to the miles and a mockery to the toiling rivals in his train. He splashes the white foam over a shoulder and forearm scarcely less white, playing with the chinking snafflebars "as a maiden plays with her glove!"

The blood of the desert!

Far off through the sun haze and the dust does he see in the shimmering mirage the silver minarets of the City of the Plains? Do his thoughts fly forward to the peg and the picket-rope, and the clear cool water in the pool below the palms? Who knows!

Oh! Hot, bold, dauntless blood of the desert!

THE SHEEP-DOG AS A COMRADE

" I have cursed your breed for a lazy crowd,
I have beaten you black and blue,
But now, with my face to the South, I'm proud
That I once owned mates like you.
And if I were back at the wide world's end,
Where the grey dust veils the plain,
I would never hammer a kelpie friend
Or a comrade barb again !"

" Tweed."

It is a generally-acknowledged fact, among those who are in touch with the work, that a man is useless among sheep without a good dog. All of us who have handled large lots of sheep know the feeling of confidence that is inspired by the presence of a reliable favourite at our horse's feet; on the other hand, the feeling of constant anxiety and apprehension when an incapable or unreliable dog is with us. Far away through the dust-clouds melting into distance the leading sheep are running. We send out our newly-purchased or half-broken sheep dog to head them. Will he go all the way? Will he split them? Will he worry? We fidget and fret in the choking dust, and if we could leave the laggards for a moment

would gallop forward ourselves to see; but we must attend to our part of the contract and trust to the pup to do his. Presently there is a rush and a scramble and the leading sheep are flung back upon the laggards to the accompaniment of much noisy barking, and we are left in indecision as to whether Larry has turned them all or left a hundred or two racing far ahead and away from us.

How different it is when we send old Tweed. At a sign he is gone, swift and silent, like a ghost into the dusty twilight. There is no anxiety now. Sitting back in the saddle we whistle gaily to our flock, knowing that, come what may, the old dog will go to the very end of the stringing line, ay, and a little way beyond it, to be sure of missing no stragglers that have gone forward. When he turns them it is silently and slowly; no rush, no hurry, and no barking. Still more is his value recognised when we are driving a small lot of sheep, say three or four. How widely he runs! What a watchful eye and nimble foot! Every move of his racing charges is met at once, almost anticipated. Never closer than thirty to forty yards from his sheep, the old dog drives them, stops them, turns them, fetches them behind us or takes them on before us; drops like a flash to our lifted hand, swings wider to a wave of our arm,

and finally almost says to us, with happy, shining eyes, "Good! They're in!" when the hurdle is drawn behind them.

But the insufficiently-trained dog knows nothing of this Napoleonic strategy; this Rule of Three is further than he has gone in Mathematics, is beyond the scope of his knowledge. He barks, he runs too close, he splits his mob of three into three mobs; gets angry and "wools" them, loses his head altogether, singles one sheep out and heels and worries, while we curse him by all the gods of the golden fleece and threaten him with whipcord and noose.

Such is the difference between the good dog and the bad; a difference that is meagrely represented by a paltry few shillings in price, but the difference to us between comfort and constant anxiety, between our efficiency and incapacity as shepherds and drovers and men to be trusted with stock. So it is that a good dog is of value above rubies, that fabulous sums have been asked for him and refused; that in some cases he is beyond the purchasing power "of love or money."

As regards sheep-dogs the experience of the writer is mostly confined to the brilliant brainy collies of the Scottish Border and to the kelpies and barbs of the Australian sheep stations. The collies are the

scholars among workers of sheep, the experts, the professors; their erudition, their knowledge and their application of it is superb. Not only are they masters of finesse in their art, working with such intelligence that, almost untold, they will shoulder a strange sheep out of their flock, but they are full of resource and forethought, full of that initiative which is so necessary in the misty Cheviots, where for a considerable time, when gathering their black-faced charges, they are beyond sight, and even hearing, of their masters.

“The bit doggie kens!” is the motto of the hill shepherds, and there is present between dog and master the closest sympathy and understanding. The tall, broad-shouldered “herd” with the plaid across his shoulder and the light step upon the heather has learned to look upon the noble beast trotting across the hill before him as a comrade and a brother. If you have ever watched these men with their dogs you will have noticed, maybe with some surprise, that they speak to them but little. Yet often they will stand—filling their pipes perhaps—gazing long and earnestly into those liquid and honest eyes, reading, who knows, what depths of dumbly-expressed devotion! In casual observation, or in conversation with them, one would think they set but

little value on their faithful collies. In reality his dog is the nearest thing to the hill man's heart.

When we see these men, returning by rail from the markets and the sheep-sales, pushing or kicking their tired, obedient collies under the seats of the railway carriages we can hardly realise that they hold these dogs so dear, and that, were the kick or the blow to come from anyone else, it would be quickly and strongly resented. Yet this is assuredly the case.

When his owner is thus clothed and in his right mind, with a masterful grip of the situation, the dog at his command crouches under the seat without a protest; but let that master be flung senseless from the effects of whisky into the same railway carriage and the dog at once constitutes himself his champion and protector. No cowering away now; erect and watchful he sits up at his master's side, with teeth bared and the light of battle in his eyes, and woe betide the incautious stranger who will lay hand upon his drunken charge! Till the last flocks are gathered, and the last grey-muzzled dogs are whistled home, it will never be fully known how many gallant collies have stood between their masters and robbery or assault in the Border towns, or how

many have howled through the snow-wreathed nights on Cheviot, keeping lonely watch over those masters in drunken stupor or in death.

In far-away Australia, where they count their sheep in thousands and their acres by tens of thousands, the sheep-dog is a dire necessity. If his work in that country scarcely calls for such fine discrimination or intimate knowledge as is required in the collie, it is indispensable that we have courage and speed, intelligence and, above all, wonderful and almost supernatural endurance. Australia is the land of infinite distances, of dusty grey miles of plain stretching away into dark brown miles of scrub, the land of long, red, sand-blown ranges and glaring, sun-burnt river frontages. Here all day, with feet blistered with the burning ground and torn with seed and burr, the gallant little sheep-dogs, with lolling red tongues but keen ears ever forward to their master's voice, follow the cantering horse-men, tireless and indefatigable.

On the large sheep stations it often happens that a man has to ride ten or fifteen miles in the morning before he reaches the place where his sheep work begins. It is necessary that he reach that point before the heat of the day has arrived. With this end in view he rides fast through the early morning

shadows, cantering perhaps for five miles at a stretch, while his dog races away in front of him, startling the big brown kangaroos from their early breakfast and setting the parrots skyward in a red-grey cloud. There are sheep to gather and drive a mile or two to the yards, there is a long, dusty afternoon in the yards themselves with the little dog barking, driving, hustling in the dust, hot and thirsty but always eager and willing. Then just when the little fellow, footsore and tired, would give his next day's feed only to be allowed to drag himself away under a shady bush and fight for his breath in the stifling air, the sheep are let out and his master, springing into the saddle, whistles for him to follow home. Ah! those long ten miles!

Too many of the stockmen care little what becomes of the dog which has worked so loyally and well for them through the heat of the day. "He will come home all right; he has all night to do it in!" they tell you, forgetting, or not knowing, that a dog, when he is following his master, whether on horse or wheel, will follow till he is utterly spent rather than lose sight of him.

But some of the stockmen are thoughtful of their dumb comrades. Many a man after a half-mile canter says, "Pull up! I must wait for old Rocket!

Poor beggar, his feet are sore!" Many a one will stoop down from his saddle and pick up Jet or Fan and carry her for four or five miles on the pommel, to his own infinite inconvenience and his horse's indescribable disgust.

The sheep-dogs of Australia are of all shapes and sizes and are of divers breeds. Collies and collie-crosses are not very frequently met with. The Scottish breed is too big for the country and does not stand the heat well. The best Australian sheep-dogs are the kelpies and the barbs. The former are small black-and-tan, sometimes black dogs. They have the full broad forehead which speaks of brain power behind it, greyhound quarters that tell of speed, and small round feet that stand the greatest possible amount of wear and tear. Some are prick-eared and some lopped; all are smooth-haired, light and swift, and positive marvels in endurance.

The barb is a larger dog. Perfectly black in colour, stout and square in build, he too has the best points of the kelpie; the broad, almost bull-dog forehead, the small feet and the short smooth hair. The barb dogs are all prick-eared and have a peculiar crouching and watchful carriage. They too are wonderfully enduring, though they are heavier dogs

than the kelpies. They fight like Japs and resent a thrashing from their masters with tooth and nail. This breed is supposed to have originated from a black dog given to one of the early squatters on the Lachlan River by a blackfellow, and is supposed to be related to the wild dogs or dingoes. Be that as it may, the barb is hard to beat for intelligence, endurance and reliability and all the qualities that go to the making of a good sheep-dog. As a comrade he is immense. A barb puppy is the sweetest of playthings. To work sheep is his natural inheritance, and as soon as his eyes are open he may be seen staggering and stumbling after the chickens or the ducks; not merely chasing them as a mongrel would, but trying to run out wide as his father does, blocking and turning, crouching and finessing, but never biting or hurting his drove.

All puppies are independent, but the independence of the barb is staggering and amazing. He knows no fear; he steals meat from under the nose of old Two-shoes, who is the boss dog-bully of the run; he tears up the dish-cloth of Ned the cook, whose language—and action—when roused is a fearful thing; and he cheerfully nibbles the hair on the fetlocks of old Nugget the draught-horse, whose temper is vile and whose kick seldom misses its

mark. And every man on the station loves that irresponsible black barb puppy.

He grows and fills out; he gains speed and confidence and the outstanding stamina of his race. He follows his master upon his shorter journeys over the run, and learns what it is to have a dry tongue cleaving to his mouth and a burr sticking to each foot at once. Then he learns the likely places to look for water, and how to run on three legs, or even two when the burrs are bad. He rounds up a mob of sheep, works them with caution and the innate skill of a long pure line of barbs, and is petted and caressed for it; he chases a passing rabbit and, wondering and protesting, is well thrashed with a doubled stockwhip. And so through good and ill he wins his way to doghood and its priceless reward—the love and confidence of his master.

The Australian sheepman is proud of his dog and takes every opportunity of telling you so. He has none of the reticence of the Cheviot shepherd; he talks to his dog much and often, and of him still oftener. He loves to recount his feats of prowess, his wonderful mastery of three sheep, his reliability with a big mob. He listens to the tale of his neighbour's puppy whose work was so fine that he had lately yarded a chicken into a jam-tin. "Nothing

at all!" says he; "the other day I heard something buzzing and found that Barb had just worked a blue-fly into a pickle bottle!" There is something a little selfish in all this. The Australian loves to have the best dog, just as he loves to have the best horse. It is hardly in this case the deep true fondness of the Scotch shepherd for his dog; and yet in many cases one does find that true fondness apparent.

There is the drover, for instance, the man who travels large flocks of sheep across the continent in the face of a thousand barriers of drought and flood; this man sets true value on his faithful comrade, for without his dog his living would be gone. "A good dog is worth two men and a boy" is a timeworn maxim of the Overland, and many of us have had the truth of it driven home in a hundred ways on the naked Western plains. With a good dog there is no "I did not think to look there," or "I did not go so far," or "The brute lay down and would not come." The dog just makes it his business to go and look, or to fetch the sheep that strayed behind. And that is why the drovers cannot do without him; and that is why, on the days on which he is not required to work, old Tweed travels in state on a cushion of sugar bags swung under the

cook's waggon; that is why there is always a choice lump of meat set aside for him when the sheep draw into camp; that is why his feet are so carefully watched and tended, and why his weary master sits up late by the camp-fire trying to fashion leather boots for him when the plains are strewn with burrs. There is no lack of appreciation here. A closer comradeship it would be hard to find; the dog dependent on the man for food, for protection, for life itself; the man dependent upon his dumb companion for reputation and the very means of making a livelihood. In no part of the world will you find these two in closer sympathy.

While speaking of the Australian sheep-dog one naturally recalls him in his capacity of comrade to the swagman, the wandering tramp of the Australian Bush. A very large majority of these men own a sheep-dog of some description as companion and guard; very often indeed it is only a mongrel crossbred; in some few cases, especially in that of *bona fide* shepherds out of work, it is a barb or a kelpie of the best type and of superlative wisdom in the sheep business. The lonely lives of these wandering men bring them to set high value upon their dogs, their only companions, and here again between man and dog there is a vast amount

of sympathy. The "tucker-bag" is never so empty but there is a little bit in the bottom of it for "the pup," and the track is never so dry and the distance to water so uncertain but that the man's old felt hat is laid on the ground at intervals and a wee drop poured into the crown of it for the pup to lap.

FARMING IN SOUTH AFRICA

THE two staple industries in South Africa are farming and goldmining, the Dutchman preferring the former, which can certainly be said to be a more healthy occupation than burrowing underground for the hidden treasures of Mother Earth. Although the small Dutch farmer predominates in South Africa there are large numbers of Englishmen who have left the old country to try their luck on the Dark Continent. These have met with varying success. Some have made large fortunes; others have met with failure, generally owing to their dogged persistence in clinging to home methods, which are rarely applicable to the altered conditions and climate.

In speaking of South Africa one includes Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, the Transvaal and Natal. South Africa cannot be called one of the grain-producing countries of the world, as she is unable to grow sufficient for home consumption, having to import flour from Canada and America, and compressed fodder from Australia.

The south-western provinces and certain parts of the Transvaal are the only places where wheat is grown in any quantity, but it is probable that all that is grown there would be insufficient to supply Cape Colony for a year.

There are large tracts of country under native occupation, such as Basutoland, East Griqualand, Pondoland and Tembuland, which are undoubtedly the best grain-producing and grazing districts of South Africa. There is no doubt that if these large districts, hilly as they are, were in the hands of progressive English farmers, and if railway communication were opened up, they could more than supply the rest of South Africa, as they are rich in soil and water, a combination which is seldom to be found, in the southern part at least, of this wonderful continent.

The native question is, however, outside the scope of this short article and must be left to the genius of the statesman to be settled.

The few traders in these native reserves do a large business in mealies (Indian corn) with the natives, forwarding them by ox-waggon to the nearest port, from which they are conveyed to other distributing centres; the native, however, rarely grows more than he can consume, as the preparation of the

ground requires a certain amount of labour which is not at all congenial to him.

Stock-raising is, without doubt, the principal occupation of the South African farmer. There are two distinct grazing districts in Cape Colony, namely: the grass country, which lies principally near the coast, the finest being in the north-east provinces and native territories, and the Karroo country, which is sparsely covered with mimosa bushes and an edible native shrub. The latter portion lies in the interior and covers the greater part of the Colony—about seventy per cent. of it, in fact; it is one great plateau rising to a height of about 4000 feet above the sea level, with numerous mountain ranges and kopjes (small, stony hills).

The greater number of the so-called rivers being practically dry for ten months of the year, the watering of stock is a difficulty ever present with the South African farmer, and generally means that water has to be raised from wells by means of pumps driven by windmills. As in all hot, dry climates, when the rain does come it washes off the soil, which is carried out to sea by the rivers, the ground being so baked that it is unable to retain the moisture.

Droughts, locusts and stock diseases are the

serious scourges of the country from the farmer's point of view, and are the cause of the loss of countless numbers of stock. Towards the close of a severe three years' drought some years ago large numbers of farmers were ruined, and one case may be cited of a farmer in the north-western provinces who managed to save only forty ostriches out of a herd of four hundred.

It is a curious fact that always at the conclusion of these severe droughts, and just when the grass and bush are commencing to spring again, the locusts appear and soon make short work of everything. This is said to be due to the fact that the eggs of the locusts, which are deposited in the ground during the dry weather, require moisture to hatch them, even though they have been laid for some years.

The destruction of the locusts in South Africa seems to be an impossible task, owing to the ignorance of the small Dutch farmer, who refuses to destroy the pest, believing that it is an "act of God" and that therefore he has no right to interfere further than driving the locusts off his small patch of oats.

Besides locusts and drought the farmer has to contend with an unusually large number of diseases of stock, including rinderpest, lung sickness, tick

fever and red water fever. The Government, however, does all in its power to stamp out these scourges by having veterinary surgeons stationed in each district and held responsible for the immediate destruction of any animal found suffering from these diseases, and this has in a great measure helped to arrest and to prevent outbreaks in various parts of the country.

Some of the farms in the Karroo are of considerable extent, forty thousand acres in one holding not being uncommon. The stock chiefly consists of the African fat-tail sheep, the Merino sheep, Angora and common goats, and ostriches.

In some parts of the Karroo, where there is only bush and a small water supply, there is no livelihood for any animal but a goat, and these constitute the only live stock of the farms. Even in the more favoured parts of the Karroo the sheep have to be moved to the better-watered parts of the Orange River Colony during the dry season. Cattle are raised only in the grass districts as they would be unable to find a living in the greater part of the Karroo.

In this semi-desert the want of water is the serious drawback to successful farming. Although the soil is rich in most parts of it, it is impossible to

grow grain there, beyond such plots as can be irrigated from dams and pumped water. The Government again assists the farmer by paying the half cost of boring and providing boring tackle in addition. The most progressive farmers avail themselves readily of this opportune assistance.

Where cereals are grown the ploughing is in all cases done by oxen, six being the number usually attached to each plough. The ploughs are for the most part of Canadian or American manufacture, the disc plough being very largely used.

As very few permanent hands are kept on the farms the ploughing is usually let out to natives. The average price for farm labour is one pound per month, with two goats or sheep per month in addition, but almost the only labour required is that of the sheep herders. These are a necessity in the north-west, where the farms are quite unfenced.

In districts where fencing is erected it usually consists of sneezewood poles set up about a chain apart, with five to seven wires, the top one, and sometimes also the middle one, being barbed. Between the posts spars are set at intervals to keep the wires in position.

In places where wood is scarce excellent posts are made with slabs of stone which have been split with

wedges into the required lengths. These are found to be very satisfactory, as in addition to their advantages in durability they resist the bush and grass fires which are so destructive to wooden fencing.

In the grass districts the old grass is burned out at the end of the winter to allow the young grass free growth after the first spring rains. These fires are also useful in killing the ticks and other insects which are such a curse to the African stock farmer.

The common red tick, which is about an eighth of an inch long, is flat and something like a crab before attaching itself to an animal, which it does by burying its head under the skin, especially in the softer parts of the body. After being on the animal for some days the tick becomes distended to several times its original size, and also takes on a peculiar grey colour; eventually it drops off and, according to popular belief, dies. Trek oxen may be seen at any time with hundreds of these ticks upon them, but no effort is made to remove them.

The waggon used for transport and farm purposes is a cumbersome vehicle about fifteen feet long, with a centre shaft (disselboom), and very strongly made. These waggons cost about eighty or ninety

pounds each. A team usually consists of from ten to eighteen oxen, according to the load and state of the roads. Fifteen miles is considered an average day's trek, a greater part of this travelling being done before sunrise and after sunset. From three to five tons is an average load. Trek oxen at the present time can be obtained for anything from ten to eighteen pounds a head.

The farmhouses are usually of the poorest description, being built of sun-dried bricks, one storey high and washed with lime. They contain three or four rooms, with cow-dung floors. Sometimes the cow-dung is mixed with bullocks' blood, which allows of them taking on a certain amount of polish. There are, of course, exceptions to this humble rule of house-building, places in which good brick walls, clean wooden floors and nice shady stoeps (verandahs) may be found. The farm buildings are primitive in the extreme and seldom consist of more than a one-sided shed where cows and calves are kept, and in which the sheep-shearing is done when the season for that work arrives. In addition there may be a barn and perhaps an implement shed of wood and corrugated iron.

Mealies are generally stored in corrugated iron tanks or in pits underground; there is always, however,

the chance of weevils doing considerable damage to them.

In good seasons two crops of forage can be got in the year, but the heavy cost of transport tells against the output, owing to the present lack of railway facilities in certain of the farming districts.

The English farmers in East Griqualand are perhaps the most progressive of any in the Colony. These men grow large quantities of oats, for which they get prices varying from ten to thirty shillings per hundred bundles, according to quality and season. The land for forage is nearly always irrigated by ditches from the mountain streams.

There are two distinct kinds of veldt (grass country)—the sweet and the sour. Sometimes one will be found on one side of a hill and the other on the other side. English grasses have been tried, but their cultivation has not met with much success, except where heavy mists prevail, ensuring a dampness of atmosphere which suits them.

The Dutch farmer seldom grows vegetables further than a few potatoes and pumpkins.

In conclusion, one may say that at the present stage of its development, South Africa does not advance any special allurements as an agricultural country. It has good grazing land in abundance,

and much land that would eventually, if closely settled, prove of value to agriculture, but the great prevalence of cattle disease, the allied scourges of drought and locusts and the difficulties presented by the dearth of labour seem to make it a good country for the fortunate American or British farmer to keep away from.

SHEEP-SHEARING IN WALES

IN the course of a drive through some of the wildest and most beautiful scenery in central Wales we found ourselves at a small inn at which we had been recommended to rest our horses and ourselves. There was mist upon the hills and a soft rain falling as we pulled up the ponies at the door. There seemed to be nobody about, and one of our number departed to look for the groom. Presently he returned to say that we had chanced upon this little inn at one of the busiest times of the year; the farmer who owned the house was shearing his sheep, and the groom and every other man and boy about the place was at work in the shearing-shed. Bowing to circumstances we took out the ponies ourselves and were shown to empty stalls, in which we left them with a good supply of hay before them. As we passed through the yard to the accompaniment of bleating sheep and barking dogs we could see at the far end of it, under a large shed, some thirty or forty men hard at work. Having obtained refreshment at the inn we sallied forth to make acquaintance

with our first Welsh sheep-shearing. In a large field on the slope of a mountain in front of us we could see a flock of sheep, fresh gathered from the hills, awaiting their call to the shears. In this field also ran loose thirty or forty ponies of different sizes and colours, evidently the horses of the shearers we had seen. On a low wall outside the yard a couple of dozen saddles were hanging. We picked our way through the muddy yard and falling rain towards the shearing-shed. Innumerable sheep-dogs of every shade and age and colour lay among our feet, old grizzled warriors of the mountains, half-grown apprentices, and tiny fluffy puppies with wide-open wondering eyes taking in every detail of this their first shearing. On our right, in a covered shed, were penned two or three hundred sheep behind a hurdle. At the hurdle, tally-stick in hand, stood an old grey man whom we at once guessed to be the owner. Courteously he invited us to the shelter of the roof, and with characteristic Welsh hospitality went out of his way to explain to us the details of the busy scene which was being enacted before us.

In the shearing-shed long benches were ranged in parallel; at each of these stood six or eight men, each shearing a sheep upon the bench in front of him. Two men were fully employed in catching the

sheep in the pens and carrying them over to the benches to set in front of the individual shearers. Each man as the sheep was set before him took up his shears and removed the belly-wool; this done he made a sign to a youth standing upon one of the benches, who thereupon flung him a short tie-rope from a bundle which he carried. Catching this deftly with one hand the shearer tied the four legs of his sheep together, and then proceeded to shear it. To the writer, who has seen much larger sheep shorn both in the British Isles and the Colonies, it seemed strangely unnecessary to tie up the tiny Welsh sheep, but it appears that sometimes they struggle very fiercely and though small are no doubt very hard to hold.

Once bound and on the bench they are helpless and "dumb before the shearer." When the sheep is shorn it is carried, with its legs still tied, and laid upon the ground just outside the shed. When the number of bound victims upon the ground reaches ten, a boy approaches with a tar brand and puts the owner's mark upon them. They are then released, and the owner or his representative marks a cross upon his tally-stick; after every ten crosses he makes a small mark to show the hundred, and thus the correct count of the sheep shorn is easily kept.

As each sheep is released it runs up into the corner of the yard to join the flock of shorn ones. As the wool is removed it is carried by boys to the end of the shed, is there rolled up and then taken to an outhouse, where it is stored. No attempt is made to class it, or to skirt the fleeces; everything is put in and the clip valued as a whole. The writer was somewhat surprised to learn that the whole flock of ewes and wethers and lambs was only likely to average one pound of wool per sheep. Certainly fleeces seemed very light and were quite free from sand or grass seed, and the sheep of course were very small. The owner explained that any which were not ripe for shearing—the wool not in proper condition—were turned back upon the hill unshorn with the others and would be mustered again later on with such stragglers as had been missed, and would be dealt with at a second shearing.

Asked how many a man would shear in a day, he said that, owing to the great distance which some of the neighbours were obliged to traverse to reach the place, work was not begun till a comparatively late hour and that about fifty sheep was a fair day's work. "Some more, some less," said the old man, with a suspicion of emphasis on the last word, which suggested that to some of his shearers the

gathering was rather a recreation than a toil. As he spoke the men began to put up their shears and file off to the house for tea. "They cannot all have tea at the same time," explained our mentor, "we can only seat twenty at a time, so some of them have to wait." All this time it was raining steadily, and we expressed a fear that the sheep which were not under cover would now be too wet to shear. But the old gentleman was hopeful. "They should be here by this time," he said. "Can you see them coming over the shoulder of the mountain in front of you?" But no sheep were in sight yet. "They are only wet on the tip of the wool, they will soon dry in the sheds," he said.

In due course they arrived. The old man shouted some quick orders in Welsh and a dozen men and boys picked up half a dozen movable hurdles and closed in behind the little flock, driving them forward towards one of the sheds. A few more sharp orders in Welsh, adjuring Thomas to hurry up and Evan to come closer, and the little flock is pressed forward to the gateway; a rush, a leap, and the leaders are through, and in a minute the whole lot is safely penned. "I am in bad health now myself," said our friend. "I cannot look after my business; but I have my sons." We noted them,

big, burly men, always busy working and giving directions, but the old man's voice was still the voice of authority; his was the ruling hand.

The men began to come back from the house. They leaned against the hurdles of the sheep pens and joked and laughed and smoked their pipes, a merry, good-humoured crowd. The catchers went in among the sheep and carried the little struggling ewes to the benches. Sometimes a funny-looking sheep with half the wool torn off it would be dumped down on the bench before one man amid the laughter of his comrades. Occasionally a shearer would miss one of the rope-ties flung to him across the shed; this too would raise a laugh and some good-humoured badinage would follow, with a Welsh cry which probably represented the equivalent of "Butter Fingers!" One man walked among the shearers with a stone on which he sharpened the shears as required. At the top of the shed the lambs were shorn by themselves on a bench.

"What do you do with the black ones?" we asked, pointing to a black ewe which lay tied upon the ground waiting for the tar-brand and the tally-stick. The old man indicated his neat suit of dark cloth and then his thick wool stockings. "I keep the black ones for myself," he said; "my wife

knits my stockings. It is something for the women to do in the long winter evenings," he added naïvely.

We learned that our friend had nearly 5000 sheep to shear, that he had started on the previous day and hoped to finish on the morrow. "Then," he said, "we shall have to go to the neighbours' places and help them, so that we shall really be shearing for a fortnight or so yet." "Yes," in answer to a query, "wool is up twopence a pound, we shall get a fair price for this year's clip. It goes to Bradford and Halifax."

In the doorway of the hotel his wife was beckoning to him. "I must go and get my tea," he said. He handed the tally-stick to a man standing near him, with a few brief orders in Welsh, and bid us a courteous farewell, after arranging that a man should leave his work to help us with our ponies. So we yoked up our rested steeds and drove off down the picturesque valley between the mountain slopes, well pleased at having seen a Welsh shearing in full swing.

THE WILD CATTLE OF CHILLINGHAM

“And as they roamed o’er hill and dell,
They fought, and aye the weakest fell,
The strongest loved and led ;
And in the groves of flowering thorn
The snow-white heifer-calves were born,
The island bulls were bred.”

The Wild White Herd.

THROUGH the glasses we had a splendid view of the king bull of the herd, standing massive and superb in their midst like some statue in white marble, while round him the cows tugged the green pasture with sleek white heads half hidden in the fern. Some one incautiously trod upon a twig. In a moment two score of horned heads flashed upward as the lithe white beasts wheeled round to face the sound. There was a soft swishing movement in the bracken, like the sound of many women fleeing upon silken skirts, then the whole herd swept down the bank of the watercourse, climbed the further side and were lost in the wooded hill beyond. But for one heart-stirring moment we had stood face to face with the wild white cattle and crossed hands with their heritage of old romance.

The herd consists at the present time of fifty-five all told, fifteen of which number are bulls. One bull takes complete command of the herd and for many years will brook no rival, reigning supreme in power until the day comes when, through weight of years, he can no longer hold his own with his younger adversaries. Then, driven from his kingdom, he becomes what is called a "banished" bull, and in this state is a menace and a danger to all who may cross his path. Morose and savage, brooding over his battle-scars, tortured by the shame of his defeat, he is ready to resent with all his shattered strength and unimpaired fury the approach of any human being who breaks upon his solitude. From the herd as a whole there is no danger, their first instinct is self-preservation—they would rather flee at the approach of a human being than turn and face him—but from the banished bulls and solitary cows with young calves at foot there is always the fear of attack.

In the daytime the white cattle lie resting upon a high plateau far up the park, but at night they come down to feed upon the rich flats below, drinking the soft night-dew in the light of the moon, wary and watchful ever, ready at the snap of a twig or the stamp of a fallow-buck to stampede hot-footed to the hills. In winter, when the strength has gone

out of the grass and the glades are drifted with snow, the park-keeper lays down hay with a cart, and the white herd, grown bold in hunger, follows the laid trail, showing no fear of the man who feeds them, but still watchful and suspicious of strangers. When a particular beast is wanted, for shooting or any other purpose, the trail of hay is laid through a trap yard some twenty yards long and half that number in width; this yard has a gate at either end worked by a rope which is manipulated by a man concealed on the leeward side of the yard. As the cattle feed through on the trail of the hay and the particular beast which is wanted steps well within the rails the signal is given and the gates are shut. The animal is thus trapped without the chance of showing fight and is run off into a second yard, where he is easily roped and disposed of as required. Not far behind the trap yard is a large shed put up for the shelter of the cattle in winter, but not in the hardest weather, I am told, will these ancient Britons condescend to take cover, as befits their island breeding. One day an old banished bull, foraging about in the vicinity of the shed, managed to get his horns entangled in a rope which had been used in carting hay and had been inadvertently left behind. At night word was brought

down to the farm that one of the wild bulls was tangled in rope and caught up in one of the trees. The agent took some men and hurried to the place, but the bull had broken loose. "On the following morning," said our guide, pointing through the yellow trees, "I found him on that little plain, and, getting fairly close to him, I raised my rifle and fired behind the shoulder for his heart. The shot appeared to take no effect, and, charging down the hill, he was almost on me, when he rolled over stone dead at my feet." The rope was found to be twisted and tied about his horns in such a manner as seemed impossible without human aid. From time to time a few of the cattle are shot for beef, or "venison" as it is called, and those who have tasted it speak highly of its quality and flavour. A year or two ago no less than five head were shot.

Many notable people have at one time or another visited Chillingham and paid their respects to the wild white cattle; among them King Edward VII., who some years ago, as Prince of Wales, successfully stalked and shot the then king bull of the herd, putting a rifle ball at the first attempt through the small vital spot in the forehead and killing the beast instantaneously. The Princess of Wales, then Princess May of Teck, can also claim the dis-

tinction of having brought down one of the herd, the head of which Her Royal Highness took away with her and treasures to this day. Not least among the many distinguished visitors to Chillingham was Landseer, the famous animal-painter, who, becoming acquainted with the late Lord Tankerville on one of his trips to the Scottish Highlands, afterwards became his guest at Chillingham; some of his pictures of the white cattle are now famous throughout the civilised world. One day during one of his visits the alarm was given at the castle that a wild bull had attacked the park-keeper. The house-party hurried to the park and found the unfortunate man lying, much injured, at the mercy of the infuriated animal, which returned again and again to the attack. The Earl had brought up his Highland staghound "Bran," which he hounded upon the bull. The dog played his part well, harassing and biting the animal and distracting his attention from his prostrate victim. These tactics finally saved the life of the park-keeper; the bull was shot there and then, and the dead body, surrounded by the little party of partakers in the episode, supplied the material for Landseer's famous picture of "The Dead Bull."

For the following facts I am indebted to a

pamphlet written by the late Lord Tankerville with allusion to the wild white herd:—

Some years ago—it was in 1875—a series of experiments was made in crossing the wild blood with the shorthorn strain. A wild bull was captured in the park and mated—with two well-bred and carefully-selected shorthorn heifers. A bull and heifer calf were the result of this cross. These were called Adam and Eve. Their heads are preserved in the estate office at Chillingham and are of unique interest to students of cattle-breeding as the first cross with the wild white herd. The heifers never bred. After this a reverse policy of mating was adopted. Three wild heifers were mated with a shorthorn bull of good pedigree. For several years only bull calves were produced, but in 1885 and 1886 two heifers were calved—these two forming the third cross in the female line. A half-wild steer called Chillingham, calved in 1885, was exhibited in Smithfield Fat Stock Show in 1888, where he was awarded highly commended and reserve number (practically third prize) in a good class of cross-bred oxen. His live weight was 16 cwt. 2 qrs. 24 lbs., dead weight 87 stones 10 lbs., hide (very thin), 6 stones 4 lbs. The head of this fine steer also adorns the estate office.

In the following year the half-wild steer Chillingham II., calved in 1886, was also shown in the Smithfield Show and was awarded third prize. His live weight was 18 cwt. 2 qrs. 5 lbs., and his carcass weight 96 stones.

These facts go to prove that the infusion of wild blood still permitted of good weight and shape as compared with any average class of cross-bred cattle. The experiments in breeding above referred to have of course in no way interfered with the pure blood of the wild white cattle; the heifers used for crossing were never returned to the herd, nor is it intended that any of their produce shall have intercourse with the pure white breed.

At the home farm I was shown among the milking herd some of the fourth and fifth crosses; some showed unmistakably the characteristics of the wild cattle, others gave no appearance of them. They say that a certain queerness of temper manifests itself in most of them, but one old cow which looked more like the wild than any of the others, was, as I was assured, a model of docility. She had been brought up on the pail and a gentler, sweeter-looking little cow it would have been hard to find.

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We strode down the park over the springy green

turf, and the setting sun gleamed through the forest aisles and touched the bracken with a rosy gold. I turned back once to look up at the topmost knoll. "Do the cattle ever go up on the top of that?" I asked. "No," said our guide, "I never saw the cattle up there, but once I saw a red deer standing on the very top with his antlers clean cut against the sky. It was a bonny sight!" At the gateway I looked back once more. The first soft shadows were drawing down upon the beeches, the pheasants had taken cover for the night. A little herd of deer browsed slowly on the slope, and somewhere up on the high ground beyond them, to us invisible, glided, like moon-wraiths through the gathering darkness, the wild white kings of Chillingham.

SADDLE AND SYMPATHY

“When you lay me to slumber no spot you can choose
But will ring to the rhythm of galloping shoes,
And under the daisies no grave be so deep
But the hoofs of the horses shall sound in my sleep.”

The Hoofs of the Horses.

IN all ages man and his horse have been more or less closely connected, nor has the higher civilisation of the present day weaned the human race from this, one of its earliest loves. Though we have come to look upon the case of the Arab of the desert as the typical one in which rider and steed are in the closest sympathy, yet over all the world to-day there are horsemen nearer to their horses than the careless observer might guess. It has been most truly observed that there are two kinds of horsemen, the man who sits on his saddle and the man who sits on his horse; they can be divided readily into two further classes, the men who look upon their horses as machines and the men who hold them as close comrades and dear friends.

The men who love their horses best are naturally the men who most depend on them. This is ex-

emplified in the case of the old highwaymen, of the bushrangers, of all bandits and outlaws that ride and have ridden beyond the latitudes of law and order. Whatever the faults of these bold and reckless men one can forgive them much for their love of their gallant steeds. No thought of any sin or shortcoming on the outlaw's part can estrange our sympathy from Dick Turpin standing in heart-broken despair over his bonny Black Bess, gasping out her life upon the dusty highway a few short miles from York. And the notorious Captain Starlight, gentleman, robber and rebel, speeding through the wooded ranges of the Western Bush, wins his way into our hearts as he leans down to caress the arched neck of the peerless Rainbow, whose strength and endurance shall outwit grim justice on his track.

Seldom, indeed, in these gentler days do we look to our steeds to carry us beyond the reach of danger and of death; and yet in the stable of many a lordly home in England the best box is kept for some old scarred favourite that has borne his master through the hail of bullets on the African veldt or on the Afghan Border and failed not in the hour of need, whose work is of the lightest now, and whose daily reward is sugar from some snow-

white hand and kisses from some fair proud English girl!

There are many of us too, who are neither high-waysmen nor soldiers, but who yet know the worth of our tried old favourites; many of us who know the warmth and power of that electric current that throbs through saddle flap and buckskin, and nerves with a subtle sympathy both horse and man to the facing of any odds. There is no square too formidable for us to charge upon, no steeple fence too big for us to climb, when we feel that telegraphic message clicking upward from the noble heart beneath us: "*All right. I know. Let me at it!*"

Given a man and horse with this strange, deep sympathy fully developed between them, there is no task too heavy for them and no road too long. Dick Turpin, Starlight, the noblest knights of old romance, the Arabs of a thousand years, have known and felt this intimate connection and companionship. How else had Dick Turpin ridden Black Bess from London to York in a single night, or Starlight ridden Rainbow, foam-wrapped but tireless and eager, a hundred miles between the sunset and the dawn? How else had Lancelot covered countless miles across the English morning to hurl his charger still strong and full of mettle upon a chance-

met foe at evening? Without this subtle understanding how did the Arab chieftains ride the long leagues from palm-grove to palm-grove, from well to well, scudding on their ghost-grey tireless gallopers like white clouds before the desert winds? For a horse is but flesh and blood after all, and there approaches the moment in every journey when the strong limbs drag wearily and the keen eyes grow dim with fatigue, when the heart beats fast with hammer strokes and the good beast sets back his ears and shortens his stride. But ere this moment, bitter and supreme, be reached the signal of failing strength has flashed from horse to man; there is a tightening of the rein, and back through cord and leather flashes the answer—" *I know, old boy !* "

So strongly is this sense developed in some horses that one notices as soon as mounting them a subtle difference from all others. You ride one horse—he is little more to you than a dull machine; he turns to right or left in answer to the rein, stops at the command of the curb, leaps forward to the spur, and that is all. You ride another, perhaps the favourite of some first-class horseman. You are no sooner down in the saddle than you feel something that you can scarcely describe, a queer thrill of

sympathy and close understanding. Your every command is obeyed so quickly it is almost anticipated. If you act in what to him is an unaccustomed way, if you ask him to do things which his master does not as a rule require of him, how quickly you can feel under your knees every nerve of him tingling in silent protest. To the joy of a straight gallop on green turf, to the revel and riot of a rush over fences, or in a race to head a thundering mob of steers, how he responds with every heart-beat!

In this and in this only lies the true delight of horsemanship. Without this close sympathy with the horse the brave and courtly Whyte Melville could never have written his grand and touching song, one verse of which the true horse lover can never forget:—

“With a neigh so faint and feeble that it touched me like a
groan,

‘Farewell,’ he seemed to murmur, ‘ere I die;’

Then set his teeth and stretched his limbs, and so I stood
alone

While the merry chase went heedless sweeping by.

Am I womanly and weak

If the tear was on my cheek

For a brotherhood that Death could thus divide;

If sickened and amazed

Through a woeful mist I gazed

On the place where the old horse died?”

It was this sympathy which Adam Lindsay Gordon, the wild and reckless horseman-poet, felt when he wrote of Britomarte and old Challenger, and the "green, grass-fed mare" that carried him so well from the shore to the town with his news of a ship in distress in the bay. And surely it was this sympathy and no other which kept a gallant soldier and good sportsman, whom I know, sitting half a winter's afternoon in a ditch holding in his lap the head of a dying favourite hunter, and sobbing like a child. To these men their horses were something more than mere machines, something to love and cherish as comrade and companion, and mourn as relative or friend when the last fence brought them down for ever.

It is easy to understand how a soldier must love his charger. The very fact of their both taking the same dread chances, among the screaming, bursting shells and spitting bullets, must bind them with a bond not to be broken. How the glory of the charge, when lances are lowered or sabres flashing, must burn into the blood of both! How the grim and stricken rider hurrying out of the fight that has gone against him must convey to the intelligent beast below him something of his own sorrow and despair at turning his back upon a foe!

In all the story of that Balaclava charge, where the Light Brigade cut its way to the Russian guns and back, nothing to me is more thrilling and pathetic than the mental picture of those riderless horses sweeping forward against the grey line of Russians, and of Cardigan on his white-legged chestnut, thoroughbred on thoroughbred, riding back before his broken troop, each of them, the horse and the man, a hero in defeat! What signals passed between that gallant rider and no less gallant horse, first in the glorious charge and later in the grim retreat? Depend on it, so closely were those two knit together in that great day's destiny that thereafter the general would need no rein to guide his steed!

Well, there are horses and horses and there are men and men. They say that you can tell a man by the company he keeps, but I would rather judge him by the horse he rides.

THE NOBLEST PROFESSION IN THE WORLD

WE are not here to apologise, we are not here to excuse ourselves, we are not here to ask your sympathy because we belong to it—the noblest profession in the world!

Who built the muscle on the brown-armed war-dogs that worked the *Victory's* guns? Who fed the armies of Napoleon? Who nursed the legions of Cæsar? Who conquered the world for Rome?—re-conquered it for France?—gave it in one glorious day to Britain?

Was it not the farmers—the husbandmen of the Tiber Valley, the vintners of Southern France, the gardeners of Kent—who did these things? Yet the world has never been wanting in a class of idlers who looked upon these busy nation-builders with something that is akin to scorn.

But the farmer, with his foot upon the mastered soil and his hand upon the gates of the great world's food supply, can laugh at such an ill-judged attitude. He belongs to the noblest profession in the world, and he knows it; not only the noblest profession

but the oldest, for, long before the first rough wooden ploughshares had turned the first Egyptian furrow, Adam, the lonely spade-man, was a farmer on the Eden slopes.

Yet the farmers have not always recognised their power. In the beginning of the last century, in the middle of it, and on till nearly the end of it, the tiller of the soil was content to take a humble place in the world's economy, a place freely allotted to him by the pampered sons of wealth and position.

"Only a farmer," said the haughty duchess, lying back in her velvet cushions while her high-stepping blooded horses flung the mud in the face of the fat-backed mare jogging serenely in the road behind. "Only a farmer," said the sleek, well-dressed banker as he walked to his office in the little market-town and passed the burly form of the countryman clad in homespun and cords.

But time never fails to set true value on the world's work. Prices for the direct produce of the farm became, it is true, somewhat lower; but farming became more intensive, competition became more fierce and keen, the demand for the earth's increase became more regular, more insistent, more universal.

In the rush and bustle of the century's end every one of the recognised professions became crowded to the doors; the overflow of the educated classes, unemployed and unattached, spread itself outward to the open fields, and many men, tossed aside by the whirling wheels of commercial competition, found themselves thrown back upon man's first kingdom of resource, the warm, the generous, the responsive soil.

The little leaven of education and refinement and high endeavour spread through the agricultural community with a quickening flow. Men of birth and breeding unquestioned, scions of the noblest houses of every land, admitted themselves openly as belonging to the ranks of the once despised. In the older countries of Europe the transition was easy from farming one's own land to farming, as a tenant, the land of some richer man. The name of tenant-farmer arose from the ashes of discredit which had formerly clung to it and was cleaned and polished in the hands of its new owner. The tiller of the soil stood justified among the highest of the land; and so he stands to-day in the eyes of every civilised nation of the earth.

What apology is required of us? Absolutely none. Rather let us be magnanimous from the

heights of our proud calling, and, while considering the less fortunate position of the city toiler or the city idler, let us consider it without a touch of scorn—thus showing ourselves the nobler.

He whom Fate has placed amid the seething turmoil of commercial activity wars unknowingly with influences that narrow and environment that dwarfs. Day after day he grows harder in the ceaseless strife, the relentless pursuit, the endless watchfulness, the hope deferred. Long years of such a life sap the strings of individuality and enjoyment and turn the blood to water, till at last, crowded out of the battle by stress of years, the city man—even though he leave the strife as a conqueror—leaves it with the inability to find rest or pleasure away from the dust of the squadrons and the clash of the swords.

How different the strong, satisfying, wholesome warfare in which we, the farmers, are from day to day engaged! It is a fight strenuous enough to keep us fully employed, yet sober and moderate enough to keep us strictly rational and generously fair. We can take our sword-thrust with equanimity out here under the arching blue of heaven, we can heal our wounds with the herbs of the highway and cool our fever with the winds of the world.

The city man may have half a million in the

bank yet the pauper may shoulder him in the street, and not until he has turned his latch-key in the lock is he safe from the hustling contact of the crowd. Out here all the acres are ours. We can walk to the farthest fence of our holding and no man can come between us and our goal. We are princes of the blood and share our royal kingdom with none but the queen of the green robe and the golden crown—Nature herself. We are her confidants. Ours are the whispered secrets of the thrilling moments when she stands off guard. The winds and the birds and the flowers are her messengers, and every year we hear more clearly their mystic tale.

We stand at the gate in a soft summer twilight and hear the yearling colts whinnying in the pasture and the young calves lowing at the barn; at our feet the collie puppies gambol; the air is electric with the vitality of youth, the mystery of being, the unanswered questions of Mother Nature's silent reign. The corn rustles gently in the breeze, the stream tinkles dreamily on the pebbles. The mantle of a great content folds us with the falling shadow of the night.

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Over yonder in the city they have grouped their chairs upon the ten-foot grass-plot, but the breeze

blows foully off the streets, the odour of smoke is in the air, rubbish and garbage choke the gutter.

Shall we blush for our clean, wind-swept country?
Shall we apologise for the slow-turning wheels of our life?



ON THE SCOTTISH BORDER

THE CLYDESDALE AT HOME

“There is nothing in the showyard that can match you, bonny
Clyde,

For you take me back in fancy to the Scottish Borderside.”

The Clydesdales.

SCOTLAND in the general sense of the word is the home of this great breed of draught-horses; and in few parts of that country are they bred to a higher standard, fed to more perfection, or used to greater advantage than in the rich agricultural valley of Tweedside. Viewed as a home for man or beast what a magnificent district it is! Northward the broad green tops of the Lammermoors, eastward the wooded height of Flodden Hill, southward the blue line of Cheviot from Yeavinger Bell to the Carter, westward the three peaks of Eildon and the far domes of Ruberslaw and the Dunion; and between, like the check on some goblin-woven plaid, lie the squares of green and brown and golden fields that make the pride of agricultural Scotland in a valley the fairest in the world.

Through this Garden of Eden runs the broad Tweed, bearing on its silvery breast a precious burden

of the lore and legend of romance. Through wide green meadows, where the giant Clydesdale mares move slowly with their foals at foot, the little burns go singing down to the Tweed, singing songs of seed-time and harvest, songs of rural simplicity and pastoral content. At distances of a mile or so apart the grey-roofed farmhouses, with their attendant groups of cottages and barns and byres, nestle among little sheltering plantations of larch or elm or fir; near them are grouped like sentinel troops the golden oat and barley stacks. Not least among these cosy farm buildings stands the warm straw-bedded stable where the big Clydesdales in their hours of leisure tug at their well-filled hay-racks, making merry music with the rope blocks on the mangers, or lie dozing in the soft yellow oat straw to the gentle patter of the brown rats in the bedding.

Betwixt farm and farm run the clean white roads, with a strip of green grass at either side, and beyond the grass the hawthorn hedges, tender green in early spring, foam-white with blossom in May, rich with berries in autumn, silver with hoar-frost in the Christmas weather. On these roads in summer you will pass the Clydesdales stepping soberly between the shafts of the farm carts, going to and from the town with their varied loads. In winter on the same

road, now deep with snow that drifts above the hedgetops, you will pass the Clydes again hauling the heavy snow-plough, four abreast, snorting in the cold frosty air and making the tug-chains ring again as they bend their proud necks to the collars. In the harvest time you will meet them yoked to the high loads of oats or barley, stepping carefully and proudly to the stack-yard as though afraid to shake a sheaf from its place.

Close to each farm steading lies the willow-shaded pond where the farm boys slide in frosty weather or in summer throw stones at the long-suffering ducks in the glad hours after school. The Clydesdales know that millpond well, for there in the dusty summer noons they are ridden knee-deep into the cool green water-weed and allowed to drink their fill, and there in the summer evenings they quench the thirst of the long hot afternoons, while the big collars slide forward on their necks and they shake themselves till the looped chains jingle.

Where in the wide world is the air so fresh or the pasture grass so green as down those sloping braes above the burns and in the shelter of the high thorn hedges? Here in the heart of the summer for two irresponsible months the big Clydesdales go free of the chains and graze along the shady headlands or

stand in the warm noons under the shadow of the spreading ash trees, nibbling at the drooping branches or rubbing one another's shoulders, or flicking the flies from a comrade's face with busy tail while accepting the same good office from him. Later on, when the grain is cut and gathered and the stubble fields lie naked to the autumn winds you will see the white-faced, feather-fetlocked beauties stepping slowly two by two from hedge to hedge, while in their wake the brown ribbons grow broader and the golden strips grow less. In a snow-white cloud the sea-gulls follow, fighting among themselves over the spoil of the rich earth's larder. The ploughman plods on, swinging between the handles of his plough with one foot on the stubble and one foot in the furrow. Every now and then he gives an order to his horses in the "saft lowland tongue of the Border;" uncouth words are his and unintelligible to the stranger, but plain and familiar to the Tweedside natives and soothing as a caress to the steady big team that swings a hand's-breadth to the right or left at every whispered word. Later in the season still there is heavy pulling for the Clydesdales on the turnip brake with the purple or yellow roots piled high upon the carts, with the steep braeside to climb and every gateway fetlock-deep in mud and slush.

Sometimes the rather monotonous routine of the winter's work is broken by the foxhunters crossing the farm. In the far distance is heard the sound of the horn and the eager music of the hounds hot upon the trail. A horseman appears on the sky-line, then another, a score, half a hundred. Down in the hollow the clamour of the hounds grows louder, and up on the brae-top they come, heads down and tails in air, spreading, driving, racing with the scent breast-high. Behind them flashes a scarlet coat, another and another, while down in the hollow sounds the crash of rotten rails and the splash of hoofs in the burn. The ploughmen stand up at their horse's heads and the big bay fellows cock their ears and fidget and fret or stand tense with wonder and awe as the earth trembles beneath them to the beat of galloping hoofs. These are exciting moments and it takes but little to set the lusty, full-fed Clydesdales off into a mad stampede, dragging heavy ploughs or lumbering carts behind them. But the men know the temper of their charges and with tender words soothe them till the big fellows bend their heads and rest them against their masters' shoulders, knowing that in spite of all the noise and tumult there is nothing to fear if those masters are there beside them.

The drivers as a rule are very fond of their big

babies, and well they may be, for all the working day is spent in their company: the horses reciprocate this affection and look with some suspicion on a stranger in their stall. If one of a pair of horses is sick the man who drives him will sit up all night to tend him, even though at dawn he must go to work as usual, but without his favourite. These men will sit for hours upon the cornbin in the stable, talking of the merits of their own horses, discussing those of their neighbours or recalling good old steeds that have worked upon this very farm in days of yore. When a complimentary day's ploughing is given to a neighbouring farmer and the farms from far and near send one or two of their best teams there is opportunity for decoration and display. The men whose horses are chosen as representatives are given half a day in which to prepare their charges for the event, which resolves itself practically into an unauthorised Clydesdale show. The horses are beribboned and braided and groomed till they shine again, for there is usually a prize given on these occasions for the best groomed and decorated pair of horses, and this is an honour much sought after.

When a ploughman leaves one farm for another it is the Clydesdales which draw the cart containing his household goods, walking with an air of additional

importance under their unaccustomed load of tables, chairs, bedding, and it may be a baby as well.

There is nothing the old well-broken Clydesdale likes better than a visit to the blacksmith's shop which is found on every farm of importance, and to which the village blacksmith comes once or twice in every week to shoe horses and set shares and to do the hundred odd jobs of the farm. It is good to watch patient old Clyde standing there in the shop, undisturbed by the creaking of the bellows, the roaring of the red cinders, or the ceaseless clang of hammer and anvil. Through a shower of falling sparks you may see his honest eyes questioning mildly as he turns his head to find out the delay when for a moment the big sledge ceases to fall. At the word of command he lifts each huge foot, taking care to keep his weight off the man who is paring his feet or fitting his shoes. And when the work is done, and the last nail driven and the last hoof cleanly rasped, how proudly he steps through the doorway, lifting his feet daintily like a child with its new red shoes!

The Clydesdale horse is as much a part of this landscape as the blue hills, the green woods, the grassy braesides and the singing, tumbling burns. It will be a sad day if ever motor-ploughs and motor-

reapers and motor-cars shall drive the draught-horse from the Border, and no longer on the headlands are seen the white-blazed faces and the active, feathered feet. I have seen the Clydesdale under many conditions and in many lands. I have seen him starting the five-ton trucks on the wharf at Cape Town, where the mule teams passing seemed to make him a giant by contrast; I have seen him girth-deep in the swamps of the Australian river-roads pulling in the waggon chains as though his heart would burst; I have seen him amid the cheers of a dense crowd stepping gaily in the amphitheatre at the Chicago shows, but here only in this beautiful silent valley did he seem to be thoroughly and emphatically at home.

A BORDER KIRN

“We shake the dust from the rafters,
And dance the spiders down.”

A Country Dance.

ONCE a year it is customary for the Border farmers to give a dance to those employed upon the farm, and this is a gift looked forward to for many weeks with great eagerness and appreciated to the full in its acceptance. As a general rule the time chosen for the “kirn,” or dance, is either the end of the harvest, when it becomes a kind of thanksgiving or harvest festival attendant upon a safely-gathered crop and a stackyard under “thack and rape,” or the last days of the old, or first days of the new year, when it naturally merges itself into the general flow of the season’s festivities. Of the times named there is no doubt that the latter is most acceptable to the farmer, apart from all the compelling influences of the season’s best traditions. There is a natural break or pause in the round of farm work. The stubble is ploughed, the majority of the turnips are lifted; the hard weather usually met with in the last few days of an ebbing year has driven the

women from the turnip-brake and left the plough-share idle in the iron lea. The lime is carted and laid; there are oats enough threshed for the horses and straw for the feeding cattle. Why not, then, make merry in the season of peace and goodwill? And how better can we speed the passing year of toil, and bow a welcome to the new one stealing over the misty Border, than by a social gathering and a dance, ringing the curtain down on Hallowe'en and harvest till it lift upon the harrows and the hay?

The word soon goes round among the workers, and from that moment the younger women and men give themselves up to the delights of anticipation. Rosy-faced damsels dream above their shawing-hooks of dresses to be altered and partners to be chosen; broad-shouldered ploughmen hear amid the heavy tramp of the Clydesdales and the rattle of the turnip carts the merry music of the dancers' feet; and the children tripping up the frosty road to school count the mornings till the kirk. In due course the invitations are sent out; these of necessity are limited to the few intimate friends of the farm-workers, to the people on the neighbouring farm, and to the house-servants of the closest farmhouses. On a convenient date before that fixed for the dance a

cart is sent to the town for the necessary provisions, for the buns and oranges and whisky that shall put the "life and mettle in our heels."

At noon of the day of the carnival the bonds of discipline are relaxed, the horses, wondering at the unwonted holiday, for once in a way munch at their mid-day mangers without the accompaniment of jingling harness; and the men and the women set themselves to work to prepare their simple ball-room for the event of the year. And simple though that ball-room be, there is much to be done in the way of cleaning and sweeping, of fixing up seats and benches, and hanging over beam and doorway, and high upon the plastered walls, the holly and laurel and yew — spoil of the big farm garden — without which no New Year gathering is complete. As a rule the dance takes place in the granary or in the square feeding-room of the mill, and if sometimes the space is rather curtailed and the roof all too low for an occasional giant, the floor is excellent, fairly swinging like a suspension bridge beneath the tramp of fifty couples.

Before six o'clock, under the hands of willing workers, the ball-room has undergone a transformation. The walls have been dusted, the floor has been

swept and swept again; needless to say the dust is still there—not Hercules himself could cleanse those boards and walls—but at least it is driven to bay up among the rafters and the tie-beams, and if it falls upon us to-night—ah! who will care to-night? Festoons of greenery are nailed upon the walls and wreaths are bound upon the beams. Benches are round the walls, and at the end of the room a platform has been set for the fiddler, whose services have long since been bespoken—for many pay court at a kirn but the fiddler is the king! The room is lit up with a few stable lanterns, and if the light is not very brilliant it is at least sufficient, for the fiddler brings no music and the dancers carry no pencils or programmes, and we know our steps so well that we need not look to the way of our going. In another part of the granary has been set out the simple supper—the currant-bun, the lemonade, the ubiquitous orange and the necessary whisky. Then, with a proud glance at our handiwork, we retire to dress for the dance.

At eight o'clock, or perhaps nine, the company has assembled, gay, expectant and good-humoured. As a rule each young man brings a girl partner, and though she has first claim upon his services,

he, of course, during the evening finds other partners as he may. Men are rather in the majority, but not overwhelmingly so; and the few who are left over without partners generally dance gaily enough with one another till some fair damsel disengaged has time and opportunity to be kind. There is no pretence of fine dressing, but all is tasteful and in order, the men in dark clothes, the women in white, or colours, or dark skirts with white bodices. An M.C. is chosen who names the dances and defines the intervals for rest, refreshment, song or recitation. In charge of all is the farm-steward, who is responsible to his master for the good behaviour of the company, for proper restriction in the matter of the liquor, and for a careful watch being kept to cope with the danger from fire. For close to this impromptu ball-room lies the crowded stackyard with the golden giants standing shoulder to shoulder under the frosty stars, and one careless smoker with a match thrown down may let the red hounds out of leash and turn the night of revel into a dawn of ruin.

At eight or nine o'clock, then, the dancers take the floor, the fiddler strikes up, and the ball is opened with the favourite "Triumph." Sometimes the farmer himself finds it convenient to open the

ball—an honour which is much appreciated. In other cases he comes later on in the evening and for an hour or two joins in the revel. Dance follows dance in quick succession and the room is filled with the glamour of love and laughter, the squeaking of the hard-driven fiddle and the shuffle of dancing feet. In the dim subdued light of the lanterns the great rafters fling shadows on the white walls, but there is no shadow on the faces of the dancers. A stranger at once notices the spirit of good-humoured earnestness which envelops the company. There is no creeping away to quiet corners with partners surfeited of dancing, no dallying over loaded suppertables, no resting or “sitting out.” One and all we are here to dance, and only to dance; we do not meet so often beneath the laurels and the lights that we can afford to spurn the light-footed goddess when she takes our hand and moves us with the music. We are here to dance, and dance we will in the dim light and the dust till the pink housemaids of the dawn come forth to sweep the steps of the eastern sky.

There are no wall-flowers, no unappropriated blessings: it is a night of favour for the girls, and fond indeed of dancing is she who has not danced her fill long before the grey light gathers over the farm

buildings and the cocks begin to call to one another 'twixt the barn and the byre. But it is a point of honour to foot it till daylight, and who shall outdance the Border maids? "Take your partners for a polka!" calls the Master of Ceremonies; there is a shuffle of feet and a rush for the girls, and woe betide the careless swain who has too long lingered over his glass or among his comrades in the little knot of ploughmen by the door, for he will enter the ball-room only to find his possible partner appropriated. Every available inch of dancing space is taken up, yet there is little or no bumping or colliding among the forty or fifty whirling couples. Round they go with rapt, contented faces, natural dancers swelling in the pride of the lilting measure, masters of the poetry of motion, with never a foot set wrong. The Scottish peasantry dance by ancestral tradition; like the Irish the lilt of a thousand years is in their feet, and at a Border kirk there is no child in the room so small but it will teach you the steps of the time-honoured country dances. The benches round the room are empty now, save where sit at long intervals, here and there, the sober housewives, the old, old women, and the smiling-faced, grey-bearded men. For these the days of the dance are done, yet they love to sit under the holly and the laurel

on nights like this and follow the whirling forms of the lads and lassies with their eyes, to keep time to the music with their steel-shod feet upon the floor, and to call back the days when none stepped lighter in the dance than they.

A noticeable feature of the kirn is the length of the dances. Not for us a few short turns of a dreamy waltz, but something spirited and sturdy like the strong, hard life we lead, something that shall shake the boarded floor and make the rafters ring, something that shall send the dust a-flying and rattle down the spiders from their homes among the beams; and, above all, we want plenty of it, for we are no London dames and sires who dance night after night and sleep the days between; but once only in the strenuous year does the fiddle call us "up the middle and down the sides," once only do our arms go round our chosen maiden and our feet keep step with hers to the music of youth and health and pride of life. And so our fiddler must be strong of arm and stout of heart, for he is setting the time to-night to no tight-laced, high-heeled degenerates of Park Lane, but to men and women worthy of the name, to princes and princesses of honest labour, who dance, as they toil, with all their heart and strength.

But even our tireless fiddler must have his chance, and while the merry dancers jest and laugh with one another round the benches, and the grey dust that no one notices floats back from roof to floor, he goes out for refreshment. Then the M.C., in the stentorian tones of one whose lungs are full of the crisp, clean air of the Lowlands, shouts through the dust and chatter, "I call on Mr So-and-so for a song!" Making some obviously insincere efforts to excuse himself, the chosen hero at last modestly consents to do his best for the good of the company, and takes his stand at one end of the room. He is listened to with a courtesy that would shame many more pretentious audiences while he sings to us some simple ballad of the countryside, some old Scots love song, or even some selection from a comic opera of the day.

When he concludes the applause is spontaneous and unaffected, and seldom indeed is a singer allowed to retire without an encore, which is probably responded to with somewhat amusing alacrity. There is no suggestion of false modesty about the singer at a Border kirk; he knows he can sing (sometimes I am bound to say he is mistaken) and he has come fully prepared to sing. The meed of praise which he has won is not unexpected, why then should he

express surprise or affect a shyness which he does not feel? Encore? Yea, verily, and encore again, if the audience demand it!

But there is a little flutter at the doorway and the company turns to welcome the master and his family, who have come down to wish success to the dance and to spend an hour or so among the people. He is received with a hearty cheer, for between master and man reigns that perfect understanding and good feeling which come only from honest labour on one side and kindly appreciation on the other. Then the steward, calling for silence, stands up in the middle of the room and proposes, in a few well-chosen, courtly and respectful words, the health of his employer and that of the family. In a few brief words of thanks the farmer acknowledges the compliment; he knows that his people are there to dance and not to listen to speeches, and already the fiddler is back in his place and tightening his strings, already the impatient feet are tapping the floor. So he contents himself with a very few words wishing everyone present a merry night. The farmer and his party choose their squires and dames and are soon spinning round the ball-room with the best, and from the point of view of the house-party there is no dance to compare with this one. No *ennui*, no boredom,

no false keeping up of appearances, no duty-dances, no influential partners that must be pleased, no forward ones that must be snubbed, only happy, smiling faces everywhere and the keen joy of motion, of the dance for the dancing's sake.

Oh! the joy of those partners; the rosy, red-lipped girls swinging you with strong arms through the maze of unlearned steps; the broad-shouldered, brown-faced men, simple in manner yet courtly, gay and gallant and so much in earnest!

But already it is midnight. The farmer and his friends bid good-night to the happy scene and are sped with a parting cheer, and one or two of the older people go slowly down the wooden staircase and out into the night with the old regret of lost youth gripping at their hearts.

Still dance follows dance in quick succession, with an occasional interval for a song or a recitation. Lemonade is carried round to the ladies and whisky to the men, and as the morning advances the fun becomes more furious. But all things must have an end, and at last, as the grey dawn steals in through the little windows

and mocks at the yellow lamps and the withering garlands and the tiring dancers, the company files out into the frosty yard, weary and just a little haggard, but proudly conscious of having danced the stars to slumber.

THE SHORTHORN AT HOME

SCOTLAND is the home of the Shorthorn, and no part of the bonny land of mist and heather is so dominated by the banner of the Red, White and Roan as that portion which is known to the world as the Border Country. There, in the rolling foothills of Cheviot, down the green banks of the Jed and Kale, and through the rich pasture lands of Tweedside you may find him, a splash of colour on the sober landscape, building weight and shape upon his summer feed.

There you will see him, an irresponsible and careless calf, flinging wanton heels to the world as he plays around his mother; there, too, you will find him in his yearling pride, one of a serried circle facing the intruder as he crosses the pasture; and it is there that, later, you will see him, fat and sleek, a mature and well-grown bullock, standing knee-deep in the cool water, flicking the June flies from his flanks.

What is his pasture? Not the open, shelterless plains of Iowa, nor the still more open and still less sheltered plains of Nebraska. The fields are small in this Border Country, yet larger here than in many

other parts of England and Scotland; few in the district that we write of would be more than forty acres in extent, and the greater number would range from twelve to twenty acres. The whole countryside is covered with sheltering plantations and copses of fir and larch and beech and ash. The hawthorn hedges around the meadows are, in many cases, tall and straggling, forming a royal "bield" against the wildest wind of winter and a shade from the warmest summer sun. Along these hedges at intervals have been planted trees—beech, ash and other hard woods—and even when the hedge itself is low and closely trimmed there is shelter and shade from these branching monarchs that stand like outposts flung forward from the large plantations to break the coming of the winds.

And the pastures themselves! Grass knee-deep—and what grass it is! Of that richest, choicest green that is found nowhere else save in the little northern islands, fed by the cool grey mists and warmed by the temperate northern sun; foxtail and rye grass, and red and white clover blended in a glory of white daisies and golden buttercups.

The hillsides are rich, and the rolling valleys are richer still, but down on the haughs, where the river

in flood has flung the rich loam of the uplands, grows the sweetest grass; and that is where the Shorthorns walk slowest and feed longest.

The staple food used for the fattening of Shorthorns is turnips, these being either the yellow variety or the Swede. The cattle are begun upon turnips and oat straw, and finished upon oil cake and linseed cake, and sometimes chaff and treacle. The younger cattle are wintered on oat straw only, but housed and bedded as carefully and lavishly as the others; and even on this humble diet they do remarkably well, the warmth and comfort and the abundance of their fare evidently being the greatest value to them. Hay is very seldom given to the Border Shorthorns, and grain practically never.

The buying in of the stock of feeding cattle is a matter of great moment to the Border farmer, and requires a considerable outlay of capital. Still, he must have cattle to eat his turnips and convert his straw into manure, so, if he cannot afford to fill his sheds with bought cattle, he will take in a certain number of animals from some neighbour or dealer. A regular amount is charged for the "board" of these steers at so much a head per week, and thus the farmer can have his turnips eaten and his straw trodden without any monetary outlay or undue

risk. Of course in a good season, that is a season when fat cattle are selling well, he will be at a disadvantage in favouring this system; but when cattle are selling badly in the spring the loss comes upon the neighbour or the dealer above mentioned and not upon the farmer who has fed and housed the stock.

There are large sales of summer and winter Short-horns each spring and autumn in all the principal market towns of the Border. These young cattle come principally from the English side of the Cheviots, very frequently from Tyneside and Carlisle, and sometimes from Yorkshire and farther south. They are brought into the towns in droves of convenient size, and are either valued and sold as a lot or are divided into such numbers as will suit a purchaser.

Those bought in the spring are turned out into the rich pastures during the summer, and in October are brought into the closes, either to be wintered on straw for another year or to be put upon full feed and sold in the following spring. Those bought in autumn are usually the older steers, ready for feeding, and they are at once put upon turnips and prepared gradually for market. The more forward among them may be ready for the Christmas sales,

but as a rule they do not go under the hammer till spring.

Most of the cattle used for dairy purposes on the Scottish Border are Shorthorns, though Ayrshires, Jerseys and others are frequently kept.

Each ploughman householder on a Border farm, as well as each farm steward, shepherd and byreman, is allowed pasture and winter feed for one cow, and almost invariably this cow is a Shorthorn.

It is one of the fairest sights of the long twilit summer evenings to see the brightly-dressed women going down through the "coo-gang" to milk the cows, with the tin pails tinkling on their arms, and their mellow voices sounding beautiful in the stillness as they call to their favourites in the soft Lowland tongue. Then the Shorthorns raise their big heads from the clover and low an answer through the mirk. They are quiet cattle as a rule, these Shorthorns, but now and again the bulls give trouble in the summer when running in the pastures with cows. Two years ago a stalwart young Border farmer nearly lost his life in an encounter with one of these when its temper had been roused. The young bull in question had run all summer in a field with some cows, and, though uncertain in temper, had

never been considered in the least degree dangerous. One day his owner, in passing through the field by himself, stopped to look at his heifers, and the bull, as was his usual custom, began to "grumble" and paw the ground. The young fellow, being close to him at the time, stepped over, and raising his foot rapped the indignant leader of the harem on his kingly jaw. This was too much for the sultan's dignity, and he charged at once, tossing the farmer over his head. The man rose somewhat dazed and ran for the fence, but the bull caught him in three strides and tossed him again, the short, blunt horns fortunately being at such an angle as not to gore him. The young fellow got up and seized the bull by the nose-ring and one horn—literally "took the bull by the horns"—and, as he was a powerfully-built man, he was able with great difficulty and muscular strain to hold the furious animal till his cries brought some ploughmen to his help, who beat off his assailant with shovels and bars. A man of less physical strength and courage would have been tossed to death long before help could reach him. As it was, our friend was badly shaken, and only rose from his bed some days later to put a charge of shot through the forehead curl of his late antagonist.

Polled Angus cattle are becoming popular on the Border, and may be seen on many farms; but the Shorthorn still keeps his pride of place and, like the Clydesdale and the Border Leicester, is still typical of the rich valleys of Tweedside.

A BORDER ROUP

THERE is no more interesting sight in farming circles on the Scottish Border than a farm sale or "roup." This takes place on the occasion of a farm changing hands, and generally occurs at the Whitsuntide term in the month of May. The crop, already above the ground, is valued on behalf of the outgoing and incoming tenants, and the former puts up his stock and implements for sale by auction upon a day appointed. There is something pathetic in this dispersion of the household goods, more especially when the farmer has farmed the land for upward of thirty or forty years, a thing by no means uncommon in this land of long leases and conservative customs; and it is a point of honour among the neighbouring farmers to attend in force and to do what they can in the way of helping the sale and raising the bids. When a really popular son of the soil is selling out the crowd at the ringside is a large and enthusiastic one, and bidding is as brisk as possible and a refutation of the idea that farmers have little money to spare and still less inclination to spare it. To the farm labourers in the im-

mediate district the day of a farm sale is frequently given as a holiday, and those who have the means of getting there will invariably attend—some walking very long distances to put in an appearance.

There is no gathering, social, political or commercial, which has more attraction for a farm-hand than this. Whether it is the love of making a bargain which is inherent in all of us, or some other subtle fascination unknown to the world at large, remains a mystery; but the fact is evident that a farm sale is a very Mecca to the pilgrims of the plough, and thither they wend in their hundreds, dressed out in their best, to do a very little buying and not much talking, but to get through a good deal of silent criticism, especially in the matter of the horses. And after all it is not strange, for these are the matters of which they *know*, and all men are most at home among those things of which they can speak with authority.

A week or two before the event the day of the sale is advertised, together with a list and description of the stock, and in some cases special cards are sent round among the farmers, detailing the breeding of the sheep and cattle and giving the exact ages, and even the names of the draught-horses.

A day or two previous to the sale the farmer and his men are busy putting up rings and arranging pens in such a way that the sheep may be run into the ring without delay when their time comes.

At last the eventful day arrives, and with it, wet or dry, comes the army of idlers and buyers and interested spectators.

The first to arrive are the shepherds and others from neighbouring places to assist in gathering and penning the stock, while the caterer and his staff are early upon the scene and take up their quarters in the capacious barn to make ready to meet the noon-day requirements of several hundreds of healthy appetites whetted by the keen spring winds and the smell of the Tweedside loam.

Early in the forenoon a long line of gigs, spring-carts, waggonettes and farm-waggonns take possession of the road leading to the farm. Traps are run from the nearest railway station and make many trips in the day, bringing stock-buyers and farmers from England and elsewhere.

The sale opens with the implements and harness, which are laid out in long lines upon the grass, the auctioneer walking from one lot to the next and knocking them down in turn to the highest bidder.

At these sales the implements are for the most part sold very cheap, and many a hearty laugh is raised when now and then some ancient cart or out-of-date farm implement is knocked down for a few pence. The old iron is generally bought by the tinkers and muggers who are always to be found at anything in the shape of a sale, and who take this opportunity of replenishing their stock of harness and maybe later in the day of buying one of the cheapest and oldest horses as well.

When the implements have all been sold the little crowd of buyers adjourns to the straw-barn, where the caterer from Berwick or Kelso or Jedburgh has an ample meal prepared; plump mutton fattened on the slopes of Cheviot, roast beef from Teviot haughs, rich pink salmon from Tweedmouth, washed down with Coldstream beer or whisky of some far-famed Border blend. Half a crown is the charge for dinner, with beer and whisky included, and most of the hungry farmers and hinds get all their money's worth. What though the dust is stirred by busy feet and the brown spiders drop from the rafters as uninvited guests!—the liquor has loosened the tongues of the big “dour” men, and quip and jibe are flung about good-naturedly; kind things are said of the incoming tenant and kindlier still of

the parting one, and one by one the company files out, wiping its collective mouth, a little redder in the face and a little readier to bid than it was before.

Luncheon over, the ewes and lambs are sold, put up quickly in lots of twenty and forty. Bidding grows brisker and the sheep bring high prices. The hoggets follow, then the eild ewes and the tups, till the last lot has been rushed into the ring and the hammer fallen for the last time as regards the sheep stock. A move is then made to another ring handy to the steading, where the cattle are sold.

The interest in these is greater, the bidding is spirited, local and distant dealers vieing with one another when the stock is good and favourably known. But interest grows to excitement when the work horses are put in the ring. These have all been inspected beforehand in the stable and their good and bad points expatiated upon by farmers, dealers and labourers. The Border farm hand takes immense pride in his pair of horses, and many an affecting parting takes place on occasions like this between bay Jock and brown Jean and the big bearded ploughman who day in and day out for eight or ten years has followed them in plough and

harrow, driven coal and corn with them, and walked by their heads up many a steep brae. To the men from other farms these horses are also interesting, and all the morning some of them have sat on the big corn-kist discussing with one another the big brown-eyed Clydesdales as they tug at their hay and rattle their wooden blocks upon the mangers. Each driver has put the finishing touch upon his own particular charges ere they step proudly into the ring to challenge the criticism of judges as keen as ever crowded a sale-yard. For many days these horses have been rested and fully fed, so that whatever they lack in make and shape they want nothing in bloom and condition, and the oldest of them dance round at the end of their rope halters with an abandon disguising their years.

Horses invariably sell well at these farm sales. There is, of course, in an agricultural district such as this one, always a keen demand for draught-horses, and farmers as a rule prefer to buy horses which they know are just fresh from the collar and well broken to the work required rather than the showy favourites of the dealer, which look well enough in a yard, but may develop weak spots after ribbing land for turnips for a week on end. The bids mount rapidly for the good strong young

horses: "forty—fifty—sixty—seventy pounds bid for that massive chestnut gelding—six years old, sound as a bell—by Danger Signal out of the best mare on the farm—eighty—eighty-five—*ninety pounds*—are you *all* done at *ninety*? going—going—*gone* to Mr So-and-So of Something-law—and dirt cheap at the money, gentlemen! And here's the mother of the last lot, *there's* a beauty for you; twelve years old and legs like steel; and fit to breed twelve more like the chestnut! *What*, only thirty pounds offered?" A silence drops upon the ring, but her old owner gives a sigh of relief as the mare is knocked down to go to a neighbouring farmer and a good home.

One by one the ten or twelve horses are shown and sold, and the money for these alone runs into a considerable amount, not far short of four figures. While the horses and cattle are being sold the whisky and beer are frequently drawn upon by a section of the buyers and others, and a lively badinage brightens the dull routine of the business. The pathos of the sale seems forgotten in the laughter bred of the farcical incidents which are constantly cropping up. The auctioneer, encouraged by prospects of a large commission, for the stock is selling in advance of his wildest dreams, breaks out into

the time-honoured jokes of his profession. "How much for the cow with the crumpled horn?" is an ancient jest that follows round the Border sales and never fails to raise the ready laugh. "Bit of a bedroom suite!" he remarks, as a shepherd's wooden hut on wheels comes under the hammer. "Prize packet here!" when a bag supposed to contain a dozen other bags in good condition is brought to our notice; when we buy them and pull them out and find them only rags none will laugh more heartily than ourselves probably.

At a recent sale I saw a goat, a long-horned patriarch which might have led the flocks of Abraham, marched slowly into the ring amid laughter and a general holding of noses. It was knocked down after keen competition for 28s., the general verdict being that it was a high price for such a bad smell! It is an axiom of the sale-yard that after luncheon a very little humour raises a very big laugh.

After the draught-horses are disposed of there are gigs and harness, the light horses for saddle and trap, and maybe a hunter that has followed the Duke's or the Berwickshire for many a season and is as well known in the hunting-field as its plucky

master is known at the Kelso Corn Exchange or the cattle-yards at St Boswells. Likely enough, too, there is an old brood mare with a foal at foot, bred as clean as Eclipse, destined some day to carry some Border farmer through the yeomanry camps upon the sands at Dunbar or maybe to carry his colours over the big fences on the Berry Moss. For all these lots there is keen competition, partly for their own intrinsic worth, and partly, perhaps mostly, because they are the property of a yeoman sportsman who is leaving the district and of whom every neighbour is sorry to see the last. By this time the afternoon is drawing to a close, already many of the visitors from the more distant districts have left to catch their trains, men are busy yoking up the horses, and once more the country roads are merry with an unaccustomed traffic.

To the late owner it is rather a sad hour, this end of the busy sale day, and as he takes a last look over what has been his home so long, and walks through the dismantled cart-shed and his half-empty stable, a great loneliness comes down with the night.

On the day following a farm sale the roads in the vicinity of the farm are busy with passing carts and

moving stock. Here a cow and a calf, here a half dozen fat steers, farther on an old mare tied behind a tinker's cart, while little flocks of sheep follow one another down the green lanes.

And another Border farm has changed hands.

THE BORDER LEICESTER AT HOME

THE Border Leicester, as all sheep husbandmen know, is a breed which was obtained by crossing the Bakewell Leicester ram upon the Cheviot ewe, the Cheviots being the hardy, handsome little hill sheep of the south of Scotland. The fault of the original English Leicesters was a certain constitutional softness and a tendency to run to fat, but this has been corrected to a great extent by the hardy characteristics of the Cheviot, and the Border Leicester is highly valued to-day, both for its mutton-producing and wool-growing qualities, under somewhat bleak and by no means pampered conditions.

The Border Leicester, as its name suggests, is most frequently found upon the Scottish Border. There may be richer corn land elsewhere than is to be found upon the famous Tweedside farms, but it is a question whether the world supplies any grazing land their superior for sheep; and of all those breeds which have been given a trial in this locality the Border Leicester has been found most suitable to the natural conditions.

- There are some cold and windy corners on the high lands north and south of Teviot and up the Bowmont Water, but the hardy Leicesters ask for no more shelter in the wildest weather than is afforded by the lee of hedge or dyke, and even the new-born lambs require but one day in the straw-twined bield before they are ready to take their chance upon the open braes with the rest of the flock. Let the slur of constitutional softness that has tarnished the escutcheon of their ancestors be at once and for ever removed. The Border Leicester is a prince of Spartans.

In the broad lands between the slopes of Lammermoor and the crests of Cheviot, between the Berwick cliffs and the Ettrick hills, the Border Leicester is everywhere. His clean white face and snowy limbs show up on every brae, and on every road between high green hedges you may meet him, fifty or a hundred strong, going down in a cloud of dust to market. The Border farmer looks upon him with gratitude and respect. Many a time when the price of barley has been low, when cattle have scarcely paid for their keep and death among the Clydesdales has still further reduced the profits of the farm, the Leicester has come to the rescue, and a good price at the lamb sales has given the farmer courage

to plunge again into the unequal struggle. On the Border are the Clydesdale, the Shorthorn, and the Leicester, and the greatest of these—in a money-making sense—is the Leicester. But though his value is appreciated by those who know him best he still remains, in this region of intensive crop farming, something of a side issue. That is to say, there is very little permanent pasture in the region of which I write. Sheep alone would never pay the high rents of the Tweedside farms, and to give up five or six hundred acres of this valuable land to such sheep farming as the open hills make possible would mean bankruptcy to the tenant who attempted it. But the Border landlords in their wisdom have incorporated in their leases the demand that each tenant in the intervals of intense cropping shall give each separate field a leisure two years under grass in every “five-year shift.” And here the Leicester, proud, snowy-fronted, steps into the breach, treading a rich manure into the exhausted soil with every stamp of his “golden hoof.” This allows of a breeding flock of two to three hundred ewes being kept on the average-sized farm of 500 acres or thereabouts. In addition to these the farmer will buy a score or two of “hoggs” in the autumn to help to eat the turnip crop.

In this district when turnips are being taken up for the cattle it is customary to pull six rows and leave six, right across the field, instead of taking up all required for the cattle from one half of the field and leaving the other half to the sheep. The reason is obvious. By the former method the sheep are drawn to all parts of the field and thus the land is manured in equal proportions. Sheep-nets are put up dividing the field into convenient divisions, and the sheep are moved from one place to another as occasion requires, until the turnips are finished.

A busy man is the "herd," or shepherd, at this time of the year as he trudges from place to place with his iron "piercer," his heavy "mell," and his bundle of nets and posts. A great part of his time in winter is taken up with setting these nets and with cutting turnips for the hogs. In this latter work, however, he generally has the assistance of a woman or boy.

The ewes must cut their turnips with no other aid than that of their sharp teeth, and when their teeth fail them they are promptly sold for mutton. But the hogs and gimmers, young and unaccustomed to the taste of turnips and the rough-and-ready means of attacking them, are fed from boxes with sliced turnips. If anyone complains of feeling cold

on a Border farm he is politely introduced to the turnip-cutter, and a quarter of an hour of steady turning of the handle generally restores the circulation.

There is no prettier sight on a winter's morning than the little flock gathered round the straw-covered heap of turnips and the big ungainly implement that reduces them to chips.

A ploughman's daughter, with a tartan shawl across her shoulders, turns the handle with tireless energy, while the shepherd tosses turnips from the heap into the top part of the machine, from which they fall upon the turning knives. Every now and then he leaves his work to carry a full box of sliced turnips over to the long feeding-troughs, round which are gathered the hungry hogs, crowding and crushing for the first place at the feast.

You can hear the tap, tap of the little feet on the frozen ground, and the rattle of the knees upon the wooden side-bars of the trough. The old collie lies stretched upon the straw near the plaid which the shepherd has discarded. A robin flits about, a red flash in the snow, now hopping about the girl's feet and then flying up on to the sheep-net and scattering a shower of frosty pearls from the tense string as he alights.

'Tis a pretty scene, and part and parcel of the Leicester's life.

As lambing-time draws near the ewe flock is brought in to some sheltered field near the home-stead and at a convenient distance from the shepherd's house. In this field wire-netting fences and short sections of paling are erected, and these are twined and bound with sheaves of barley straw, so as to make barriers to break the bitter March winds from the east and north. In these enclosures the yellow, staggering, but wholly independent Border Leicester lambs first see the light of day. If the weather is very cold and stormy they may be left in this shelter for a couple of days, but at the first glint of sunshine they are driven out to the "out-by" fields, and take up their burden of life in the open, their number constantly being added to by reinforcements from the lambing-field.

If the shepherd was a busy man during the season of net-setting and turnip-cutting he is still busier now, spending sometimes the whole night sitting up among the ewes, and working all day at mothering orphan lambs, driving the "twins" and "singles" to their respective pastures, feeding sick ewes, putting up extra "bields" and a hundred other requirements of this busiest of all busy times.

At last, however, the last ewe has licked over the last comer, and proudly and fussily led it out to the pasture, and the shepherd once more breathes freely and has time to sleep at nights. He still has a little band of orphans, probably, to attend to and to feed with cow's milk from a bottle, but these are scarcely any trouble, coming running to his feet as soon as he appears in the field. Beyond this his work is principally confined to walking through the flocks three times a day, mothering lost lambs and patching up broken fences. Playtime comes with the April and May days. In every grass field you may see the longtails running races along the banks of the burns, leaping and bucking and prancing in the pride of youth and strength. A little later we see them, short-tailed and subdued, growing and fattening with the lengthening days, and looking absurdly big for the nursery, as, tall almost as their mothers, they tug and battle for their breakfast milk.

June comes with a rainbow glory of wild flowers and a blaze of white blossom on the hawthorn hedges, and with it comes the washing and shearing of the ewes.

Sheep-washing on the Border is still somewhat a primitive affair. One of the rippling "burns" is

dammed until a deep pool is formed; from a high platform the ewes are tossed into this and made to swim fifteen or twenty yards up the stream; they are then turned out into the meadow by means of guiding fences, and here they soon dry in the warm wind and sunlight—for always a bright day is chosen for “washing the sheep.”

A few days later comes the shearing. In little lots of thirty or forty the ewes are taken into a shed at the steading, and there the shepherd, with possibly one assistant, strips from them their great white fleeces and sends them naked and weirdly white back to their pastures, where their own lambs have some difficulty in recognising them.

The wool is stacked in an outhouse to await the arrival of the wool merchant's representative from Halifax or some other industrial centre.

This important personage comes, sees, and sets a price which the farmer, perforce, accepts. The wool is weighed in bundles of ten or a dozen fleeces and tossed into one huge bale, into which it is well trodden by the men and women of the farm. It is then securely sewn and put upon a cart to be drawn to the railway station. Very soon after this the first lamb sale of the season takes place at one of the market towns of the Border, and these sales continue

throughout the summer months at intervals of two weeks or so. The drawing of the "top lambs" for the first sale is a matter of great importance on the farm, and only after long deliberation is the choice made.

In the grey of early morning the shepherd starts with his little flock of three or four or five score lambs to cover the six or eight miles that may lie between him and the market. As he nears the town the road becomes a dusty moving mass of lambs, flock after flock, closely following one another. Still nearer the yards the congestion becomes greater, and often the whole line is completely stopped while away in front the foremost lots are being yarded into pens. At last all are safely disposed of in the quarters allotted to them and the sale begins, the lots being driven into the covered auction ring one at a time and sold to the highest bidder. Up on the tiered benches the farmers wait breathlessly as the bids for their "tops" creep up slowly, sixpence at a time, in the weird, expectant hush of the market. At last they reach the limit; there is suggestive silence, and the hammer falls merrily on a top-notch price or with the dull thud of clod on coffin to those whose hopes were high and whose purse is well-nigh empty. A fortnight later

another draft of lambs is chosen, and so on till the last "cruit" or weakling has left the farm, for this is the survival not of the fittest but of the least fit.

Later on in the season come the sales of the draft-ewes, when those of the breeding flock whose failing teeth hold out small hopes for another winter on turnips are taken off to market after having been carefully fattened on rape and cabbages. Then come the "gimmer" or young ewe sales, when the farmer replaces his diminished ewe stock with strong fresh blood from some other district, often from far-off Caithness in the windy north.

As the autumn days shorten into winter the Border Leicesters are taken off the "seeds," or young grass fields, and some of the first-pulled turnips are thrown down to them upon the old grass pastures; a little later they are set upon the turnips and fend for themselves among the frozen roots. The hillmen swear by the blackface and Cheviot, and out on the bare slopes of the Cheviot Hills those breeds divide the kingship, but down in the wooded valleys north of Bowmont and south of Gala Water there is only one prince for us—the Border Leicester.

THE IRISH HARVESTER

THE green little island has its detractors, but it is generally conceded that at least the Irishman makes a good labourer. In every important engineering work in every land you will find him in hundreds, with axe and pick and shovel preparing the way for the finer labours of the Scottish engineer; and on the Scottish Border when extra labour is required to gather the harvest it is the Irishman who fills the gap. Any day after the first week in August large bands of Irishmen may be seen in the streets and squares of the market-towns of the Border, ready to barter their stalwart services for hire. A merry, good-humoured crowd they are, some of them weirdly picturesque in the fluttering rags of the distressful country, some of them plainly and neatly dressed in the ordinary garb of the working man. Of late years money is scarce and there is not much drinking among them, all being busily intent on the one object of getting employment as soon as possible.

Those who have worked and given satisfaction on a certain farm in former years have no need thus to

hawk their labour in the open market; a line to their last year's employer will in nine cases out of ten secure them the situation in preference to others. Some of these letters are weird and wonderful productions, ludicrous and not a little pathetic in their unconventional composition and impossible spelling. In many cases one man writes on behalf of himself and a few others, engaging on the usual terms to bring a gang of men with him sufficient for the requirements of the farm to which he has applied. An answer is sent to him, stating the wages which the farmer is prepared to give and the date at which he will be ready to begin cutting his corn. Punctual to the appointed hour the little band of men arrive at the farm; maybe they have come over direct from Dublin or Belfast, herded upon the steamer like driven cattle; maybe they have only come from Glasgow, leaving some rough job in yard or docks for this happy, healthy month's holiday among the yellow grain and the clean scents of a Border autumn. As to their quarters at the farm they are not particular. Plenty of clean, sweet oat straw and a couple of well-washed grey blankets and our Irishman shares his outhouse with half a dozen others and sleeps as only healthy labour can.

His food is simple and good. A cup of tea in the

early morning, porridge and milk at eight o'clock for breakfast, dinner at one o'clock, consisting of a bottle of beer and a loaf of bread, and porridge again for supper when the day's work is over, with an occasional rabbit caught in the fields, makes up his list of meals for a day which is full of strenuous labour. Yet the Irish harvester is strong and lusty and makes light of the big oat-sheaves as he tosses them to cart or stack, tireless, through the blazing hours. Sometimes, when the crop is much laid by heavy rain, making it almost impossible to be cut by the reaping machines, it is let by contract to the Irishmen, who, at an agreed price per acre, engage to reap it with hooks and stook it in the field ready for the carts. But, generally speaking, the Irish harvester is paid by the week, and works shoulder to shoulder with the men and women who carry on the ordinary work of the farm. He is a congenial companion, full of good-humoured jest and banter, and is soon installed as a favourite among men and women alike. Naturally an industrious worker, he seldom fails to satisfy his employer and earn his wage.

His first work is to bind the sheaves behind the reaping machines. Each Irishman has a woman as a helper. The woman makes the band, and with

the aid of a small hand rake gathers the sheaf and lays it upon the band. The Irishman fastens the band and sets up the sheaves, two at a time, in the stooks. Sometimes his employment is setting up the bound sheaves laid by the "binder," and in wet weather, when all cutting is stopped, the Irishmen walk in line through the wet stubble setting up the stooks which the wind or heavy rain has displaced. Clad in only shirt and trousers, with sinewy neck and chest bared to the sun, and sleeves rolled above the elbow, regardless of occasional thistles in the crop, the harvester toils all day among the sheaves, his only recreation being when a rabbit, stirred from its lair in the standing corn by the hum of the machinery, rushes out and across the field, pursued by shouts of men and boys. Then the Irish blood is roused, and with a yell reminiscent of Donnybrook our harvester flings himself into the fray, rushing, wheeling and stumbling after the frightened rabbit, aiming furious kicks at it with his heavy boot, till at last either he or one of his companions knocks over the bewildered animal and lays it upon a stook to be claimed at the end of the day and carried home in triumph for supper. The rabbits are the perquisites of the workers in the harvest-field, the farmer being only too glad as a rule to see them

killed—though some will not allow their people to interfere with them. There is no doubt that chasing rabbits occasions some delay in the work, and for this reason it is often objected to but generally winked at, and the harvester returns to his work with no less ardour for this trifling interlude.

When the last field of corn is cut the work of the Irishman is only half done. Almost immediately the leading-in of the crop commences, and to each Irishman is given charge of a horse and cart. Now, above all, the Irishman is a horseman, and in this part of the work he generally excels, never neglecting to feed and water his horse at the proper time and seldom getting into any difficulties in his driving or loading. The loading of a cart with sheaves is scarcely the easy work which it appears, and many a man trying it for the first time has found the truth of this. In this particular item the work of the Irish harvester is skilled labour, and as a rule he takes some pride in loading high and true.

The wages paid to the Irish harvesters are fairly high, ranging from nineteen to twenty-four shillings a week, or sometimes higher. Prices vary a little on the different places, and naturally the harvester wishes to obtain the highest possible price for his labour. Consequently he is discontented if, having

agreed for twenty shillings to work at a certain place, he finds afterwards that his countrymen on the next farm are getting twenty-two shillings for similar work. This sometimes leads to friction between the Irish and their employers, to miniature strikes and consequent delays; but as a rule the Irishman is amenable to reason, is satisfied with a fair wage and gives honest labour in return for it. At the end of the harvest he is paid his money in full, and he trudges off either to resume work at some later farm or to take up his ordinary work in the large towns, or possibly to return by boat to his little cottage home in Ireland, the richer in health and pocket by his month or five weeks' harvesting. Some of the men immediately on being paid their wages post them to their wives or relatives in Ireland or in the west of Scotland; others, all too foolish in their generation, make for the nearest public-house and dissipate in a few days the pounds which they have toiled so hard to earn, only to appear in the police-courts and finally to leave the district as poor as when they entered it.

The introduction of the reaper-and-binder has perhaps made some difference to the demand for Irish labour, as fewer hands can now get through the work of cutting the crop. But the carrying of it

still demands a certain number of extra men, and these are filled up from the ranks of the Irish as before. In the month of July comes the vanguard of the Irish invasion, for men are sometimes required on the Border farms to help with the hay and to single turnips, and many of the harvesters put in their time at this work while waiting for the general harvest to begin. But these few stragglers of the advance guard are hardly noticed among the occasional workers of the countryside. It is only when August is fairly started, and the turnips are met in the drills, and the corn is turning from green to gold, that the invasion becomes pronounced and takes on a national significance. Then the lonely roads are covered with the straggling regiments of men in want of work, each one carrying his little bundle of necessities in a coloured handkerchief either held in his hand or swung over his shoulder on a stick; the streets of the little country towns resound to the echo of an unaccustomed brogue, and then we know that once more the harvest is near.

THE WOMEN WORKERS

IN many parts of England and Scotland it is still the custom to employ women in the labour of the fields, and in the Border district, at least, it is a custom which shows no signs of falling into abeyance. Many people are ardently opposed to the idea of women being employed in work which in all apparent reason should be done by men, but there is no argument stronger in favour of women workers than that supplied by the women themselves, who are perfect pictures of rosy health and rounded muscular strength.

They do not suggest, as some people would have us believe, the idea of slaves or beasts of burden; but their happy, sunny faces serve only to call to mind the cruel contrast between this healthy, hearty type of womanhood and that of their less fortunate sisters in the city, whose white faces and lagging steps betray the dull oppression of their daily tasks.

There is an independence about these women workers which commands one to believe that in spite of their long hours and regular occupation they are in some subtle measure their own mistresses,

and are in reality much better off than their relations or friends who prefer to be tied down to the routine and livery of domestic service. To the women workers in the fields a healthy home life of household duty goes hand-in-hand with the sterner toil in the sunshine and the rain, and in hundreds of Border cottages the daughters of the house work from sunrise till sunset outside, and come home only to redouble their industry in the little details of domestic economy as soon as the lamps are lit.

Each ploughman or householder on a farm supplies one or possibly two women workers, and men who have strong and able daughters need never fear lack of employment. In some cases single women are given a house, and these manage to cook and clean and wash and mend for themselves as well as to get through their long day's work in the fields. The old word "bondager," which was used to express "woman worker," in early days, is gradually becoming obsolete, and rightly so, as it conveys a totally misleading impression of a bondage which has never existed in the ordinary sense of the word.

The women, as they work away among the freshly-cut hay, or stand in a long line singling turnips, form

in their gay summer colours a picturesque and, to many people, a unique group. In winter, in their heavy brown skirts and brown hats, but from some slight disparity in height or figure it is difficult to tell one from another. Some years ago they almost invariably wore a large poke bonnet, a head-dress which irresistibly reminded one of a covered carrier's cart, but this, to the ultimate gain of our Border landscapes, has been now discarded. Their skirts, for convenience sake, are worn short, reaching but a short distance below the knee, and their laced boots are of necessity strong and heavy. They wear no gloves at their work save in exceptional seasons when the crop is full of thistles. Their hours are similar to those of the men; they are in the field or standing ready to begin work at six o'clock in the morning, and they leave off at eleven o'clock for dinner, beginning again at one in the afternoon and working till six. At four o'clock they take their tea. In harvest their hours are slightly different, and are again the same as those of the men. They are, of course, under the immediate supervision of the steward, but in a large majority of cases may be safely trusted to do an honest day's work without interference or attention.

Sober and industrious workers they are. Seldom

or never does one hear of drunkenness among them, and as a rule their characters are above reproach. Many times in cases of sickness and of sorrow have they shown that in their rough work they have lost nothing of the womanliness which is valued in all spheres of life, as much among cottagers as queens. To their fellow-workers they are courteous and friendly, to their employers respectful and obliging, and loyal and dutiful in their homes.

Roughly speaking, the women employed on a farm are in proportion to the number of ploughmen as one to one. Thus a farm on which are kept five pairs of horses will have work for five or six women, work which from season to season will keep them fully employed without their being used in any way to do the work of men. They have, except in very exceptional cases, nothing to do with the horses, though occasionally one of them may be told off to drive a roller or a harrow or to lay down a cartful of turnips to the sheep. In harvest time they follow the reapers, laying bands for the grain, which is bound into sheaves by the men. Here, in long sunny days, their work is arduous, but they toil merrily, bandying light jests with the male helpers, and perhaps they like best the happy hours upon the "hairst rig." Then come the frosty mornings

and they work at the threshing mill, feeding the sheaves, filling the bags, or, down in the barn among the whirling chaff and dust, raking down the golden straw in rolling waves and carrying it out in great roped bundles to the cattle-sheds and the byre. Then there are wet days when they sit in the straw barn and wind ropes for next year's thatching, and tie the drawn wheat straw into sheaves for the same. But even in the wintry weather there is work for the women in the fields, for the turnips have to be gathered and "shawed"—cold work this in frosty weather—and the hogs in the turnip brake must have turnips cut to them.

Then there are days of heavy work about Christmas time, when the cattle closes are cleaned and the manure is carted out to the fields. The women, with straw ropes wound round their legs, stand all day filling the carts, tossing up the heavy graip-fulls with the speed and ease of a muscular man. Later on in the season one finds them in a busy row cleaning the ploughed land, tossing the scattered quickens together into heaps, from which they are gathered by the carts. Still later, in their oldest and shortest dresses, they march steadily and monotonously up and down the ribbed turnip land sowing the powdered artificial manure, or with bent

backs and busy fingers they lean above the ridges planting the young cabbage plants.

Summer comes and like the wild birds the women of the fields take on a brighter plumage, and flashes of red or purple light up their sombre dresses, while their long hoes flash at the singling or their hand rakes in the hayfield, and almost before they know it, it is harvest time again. Besides the work I have named there are many odd jobs which in the course of the farming year fall to the lot of the women, such as cleaning up the cuttings of the hedges, turning over the half-rotted heaps of manure in the fields, cutting thistles, gathering stones from the hayfields, and sometimes lending a hand among the sheep.

It will be seen that though in some cases and at certain seasons of the year the exigencies of farm work demand that the men and women shall work in close proximity to one another, for the most part the little band of women have a separate field of labour. Many people are of opinion that such women, by their surroundings and their careless camaraderie as regards the men on the farms, must become coarse and unsexed. This is far from being the case. The proximity of their domestic life and its interests prevents anything of the kind. Prac-

tically every man who works upon the place has in the little band of women workers at least one daughter, sister or relative; therefore his language towards, and treatment of, any woman in that band is necessarily regulated by the manner in which he desires his own kinswoman to be treated and addressed. In consequence of this the almost invariable attitude of the men to the women is one of rough but good-natured courtesy, and I have heard of the female workers at once protesting against the coarse language and profanity of certain men with whom they have had to work, a protest which in all probability would, on account of its obvious uselessness, never have been made in the case of, say, the women hop-pickers of Kent, or the female herring-gutters of the East Coast fishing towns. This in itself would argue a cleaner atmosphere and better tone than the detractors of the system would admit.

The women on the Border farms work slowly as a rule, with the steady rise and fall of the arm that has all day for its work. But there is no actual idling; there is in every phase of farm work a recognised amount to be done by each person employed, and without any undue or needless pressure that tale of work is daily exacted, and the farm women, when

civilly and tactfully treated, never fail to faithfully earn their wages—wages which, if they were ridiculously low in olden times, are now more in accordance with justice.

With broad shoulders and strong, sturdy limbs these Amazons of the Tweed and Teviot are comely and good to look upon, and their thews and sinews are those of men. There is an ancient custom which is still upheld upon the Border farms; when the last field of corn is cut it is the privilege of the women to “toss” the “maister” if he is to be found within reach. He, poor unsuspecting man, is probably standing on the braeside watching with undisguised satisfaction the last swathe of oats dipping before the sweep of the reaper blade and congratulating himself upon another crop safely mown, when, in a moment, a dozen strong hands are upon him, and, powerless as Samson in the hands of the Philistines, he is swung up by the sturdy brown arms and “tossed” to the accompaniment of much rippling merriment from the “lassies.” Of necessity he submits with the best possible grace.

When the bagged corn has to be carried from the barn to the granary up a flight of steep and narrow steps, if so be that the men are by any chance unavailable for the work on that particular day, there

is a small quantity of grain put in each bag and the women do the carrying. This small quantity, rather less than half a bag, is called by courtesy a "bondager's pickle," and looks ridiculously slight as a burden, but to the man who is totally unused to carrying weights it will seem, on trial, quite enough to be carried up those steps when the journey has to be made not once but many times. I have recollections as a callow youth of expressing contempt for the small amounts these women carried. I was invited to try the weight of it on the stairs and remember stumbling and falling ignominiously with the despised "bondager's pickle" lying like a weight of sin across my chest. Since then I have learned to admire at a distance the breadth and brawn of these short-kilted dames.

Women of considerable age work in the fields, and, old and wrinkled as they look, their strength and staying power is remarkable. Gradually, finally, they fade away from the furrow and the headland, and some young girl takes up the hook and the hoe where they laid it down, and toils on in sunlight and shower, through seed-time and hay-time and harvest.

But it is not all labour on the farms. There are the Sundays that come to break the week, when the

women put aside their rough garb of the fields and, neatly dressed and bonneted and shod, walk far across the green braes to the kirk or to farm or town to visit their friends and relatives. There are the long summer evenings when the sun slants through the larches on the hills, and the young ploughmen wait at the stiles to take their arms and lead them away down the old, old paths of love's delight. There are fast days, and fair days, and holidays when the graips and shawing-hooks are laid aside for a few hours, when the brown-faced, weather-beaten women get a glimpse of the world of sham and tinsel so far removed from their own.

For the most part they are contented, as they should be, for they are earning good wages, they are helping their parents to keep a home together or are gathering the gear that in time shall help to build them a home of their own, and very seldom indeed are they in any but the best of health. Rain and wind and snow have no terrors for them; long years they have lived hand-in-hand with the weather, and they are glad to meet its worst in winter, and in summer to revel in its best. They have no fear for their complexions; perhaps they know in their mind that no lady in the land can vie with them in the red roses of their cheeks. These are the same buxom girls

that are our partners at the "kirn," whose feet trip so lightly over the boarded floors. And those of us who have only met them at such a time, with the flowers among their hair and their hearts beating to the music of the dance, can hardly recognise them as the slow-walking, determined-looking toilers who pass us shyly on the road on the way to their daily work. But at work or at play they are always a fine type of healthy womanhood, big-boned, full-breasted, deep-shouldered, fit to be the mothers of such a splendid race as the big Border men who swing the heavy oat-sheaves to the top of the highest stack with a turn of the wrist, and fling the heavy bags of barley to the crown of their carts without an effort.

When the women-workers are no longer seen in our fields, when they are swallowed up, as it were, in the long line of ghastly, white-faced weeds that parade the streets of our large cities and manufacturing towns, then good-bye to the stalwart, meal-fed men that such women have cradled and fed—the pride of the Scottish Border!

A BORDER VILLAGE

IN the Border villages may still be studied every phase of that interesting and engrossing subject, the rural Scottish character, which has been so much misrepresented of late in kail-yard literature, sometimes to its obvious advantage, sometimes very much the reverse. In our village we have neither the overwrought sentimentalists of Ian Maclaren nor the brutal materialists of the author of *The House with the Green Shutters*, but just a sane and rational type of Lowland rustic, of artisan and farmer and dominie, such as may be found, with some small difference of speech and habit, in any village of the British Isles. We have no church and no hotel, only a school and a "smiddy," a carpenter's place and a tiny shop—it is dignified with the name of shop—which displays in its narrow windows some tobacco, some wool for knitting, and a few sticks of the red and white rock which is so dear to the heart of the Scottish bairns, who stand "glow'ring" at the "sweetie" with their round fat fingers in their smutty mouths. A line of farm cottages fronts the lower part of our street, and

in the middle of the village, big and square among its laurels and gooseberry bushes, stands the farmhouse, looking quite majestic among its humbler neighbours. The street itself is long and straggling, winding down the braeside to end at the burn below the smiddy. It is not paved, and as yet we have not the luxury of a foot-path, but as the traffic is small this does not matter much. In the street in their different seasons one may stumble over a sheaf of oats, a turnip, or a "gripefu" of the farmyard manure dropped from the laden carts as they go by.

Somehow the schoolhouse seems to us the most important edifice in our community, for to its door files the long line of "tidied" scholars, with their satchels on their sturdy shoulders and their hands thrust deep into the pockets of their "trews," in the morning, and from it at noon tumbles the wild, turbulent flood of lads and lassies that holds the streets for an hour of riotous empiry, spinning their "peeries" or knuckling their "bools" under the very feet of the passing horses, blowing their "yit-stalk" pipes, and searching the hedge below the burn for the nests of "sprugs" and "shilfies." And the dominie, good man that he is, stands watching from his doorway, strangely loth to touch

the big bell that shall summon these merry elves from the sunny street to another couple of hours in the musty classroom. But lessons—and dominies to impart them—are necessary evils, and we in the village must see to it that our bairns hold their own “at the buiks” with any in the parish, that our “schule” sends forth its quota of good scholars who shall not in after years and other lands disgrace our hamlet’s name.

The carpenter and blacksmith are men of weight and position. Their fathers and grandfathers have stood at the same bench and the same anvil, have chipped with the selfsame adzes and swung the same ten-pound sledges for more years than the oldest inhabitant can imagine in his wildest flights of fancy. They themselves know the personal history of every man, woman and child in the village. They carry on a business, these country tradesmen, that has changed but little in a hundred years; new clients are but seldom put upon their books, and of bad debts they have never a one. They put new bottoms into old carts that their fathers made, and weld iron-work that their grandsires wrought. They work according to the old traditions of their bench and forge, eschewing new-fangled ways and the labour-saving appliances

of to-day, but they are honest tradesmen and reliable, and we need them in our "clachan."

The policeman has a whitewashed residence at the lower end of the village, with "Police Station" writ bravely across the doorway in big black letters. Here are posted the county notices and the bye-laws of the parish; here too is pasted the standing invitation to the youth of the district to join the King's Own Scottish Borderers or some kindred corps. The position of our "polisman" is something of a sinecure. It is true that he reports himself at stated times in the market-town and at each farm in the vicinity, but he is seldom seen wrestling with a drunkard or apprehending a thief. We drink—but not in the clachan; if we steal we go beyond the burn to satisfy our predatory instincts.

The farmer, whose square house frowns upon the cottages of his poorer neighbours, whose workers' dwellings line our roadway, whose mill-chimney scatters smuts upon our weekly washing, whose yellow stacks obstruct our view of the Tweed Valley, is something of a monarch in our midst. He is the man we first consult in the matter of village reform; from him we borrow in cases of emergency the horse and saddle of our need. He may be depended on to take the chair at our penny readings and to represent

us on the "comitee" of the parish church. He is a sort of president to our community, to which the laird, whose big mansion breaks the woods between here and Cheviot, is a patron.

There is no more interesting person in the village than old Sandy M'Lean, who is proud owner of the window with the sweeties in it, and of the garden with the clipped holly hedge and the wall-flowers; he is older almost than any two men amongst us, and he can remember when the blacksmith's father was a young man; he needs no further title to our respect and awe. He is "mairrit on" his third wife, and young and healthy as she is, the opinion of the village wiseacres is that he will outlive her as he did the others. Another old inhabitant is the "herd's faither." He lives in the cottage at the top of our one long street; he was a herd on Kale Water half a century ago, and his son now holds that responsible position on the farm. Old Sandy and he are fast friends, and many a stiff game at draughts they fight to a finish in the cottage of the former, each bantering the other about his failing "eesicht," though the eye of each is keen as a Caithness eagle's and clear as the College Burn.

Though we have no kirk in our little hanlet we have a "kirk-yaird," and under its spreading rowans

lie some of our loved ones; but there are few deaths among us up here where the clean winds blow from Cheviot, and seldom—very seldom, thank God!—the dark, slow plumes come nodding over the burn and up the brae, while the children stand awestruck and silent, watching with wide-open eyes our humble dead go home.

Sometimes the Buccleuch Hunt comes trotting through our street, all splendid in pink and white, with glossy boots and shining spurs and horses splashed with mud and foam; then we come to our garden gates and watch them pass, and pick out the laird and the laird's daughter, and the farmer on his shaggy brown mare, and a few others that we know by sight; and the children stand along the churchyard wall and try with dancing eyes and drawn breath to take in all the gorgeous spectacle at once and to miss nothing.

These are the principal breaks in the quiet routine of our life, and almost the only events which attract us in summer from our shady porches and in winter from our cosy inglesides. Occasionally, it is true, the gentlefolk of the district interest themselves in getting up a concert for our amusement, and sometimes we get up among ourselves a "penny reading," a popular form of village entertainment, at which

the parish minister reads humorous prose and the dominie sings us the Highland songs of his youth. Sometimes a travelling troupe of comic actors leaves the beaten track and finds its way up between the high hawthorn hedges, turns out its raw-boned horse at the burnside, and plays in the evening to a half-amused, half-cynical audience which crams the little school-room from roof to floor. But for the most part we entertain ourselves; in the summer evenings in the village street, gathered round the pump or perched upon the old snow-plough half hidden in hemlock and bluebells, considering the prospects of the harvest or the failure of the hay; and in winter, in the red light of the smiddy fire, criticising Imperial policy or advancing Liberal views. We are all "Leeberals" in our village, save only old Sandy M'Lean, who takes the other side—merely, I believe, for purposes of argument.

But the younger members of our community have other interests. In the long summer twilights they wander two and two, man and maid, down the street and across the little foot-bridge over the burn and away into the shadows, taking the old road that so many millions of lovers have taken before them. On the green strip of turf opposite the carpenter's shop a number of lads play quoits. This has been the

favourite game in our village from time immemorial. Some of us are champion quoiters and can throw the discus with any player on the Borders. A little crowd surrounds the game, and as each player toes the mark and takes long and deliberate aim at the white feather which acts as a peg he is plied with a good-natured badinage from the bystanders.

Some of us are ardent gardeners, and in the height of the summer our little plots are a sight to see, glowing with stocks and asters and sweet peas. Above and below the village the pink dog-roses run riot in the hedges and the wildflowers blaze upon the banks; later on the bluebells come and the bracken turns to gold, and the ash trees in the "coo-gang" drop their leaves; then the children go far afield hunting for wild raspberries and gorgeous hips and haws to twine into necklets and bangles.

Later still the white frosts chain the roadway with steel, or the snow coming in dark purple clouds from the north falls day after day, till the stacks of timber outside the "joiner's" shop are wrapped in soft white mantles, and the pump, "hap-pit" in its straw ropes, stands like some weird cloaked sentinel to point the boundary of the hidden road. Then we come to our doors to watch the big snow-plough go sliding through the drifts, with the

farmer's Clydesdales snorting in the cold air and struggling for footing in the snow, and behind them a load of merry children stacked upon the plough—happy as dukes and duchesses, and shouting triumphantly to their less fortunate comrades.

Among our oldest institutions we count our village postman. He has carried our messages of love and life and death for more years than most of us can remember. At first he used to walk, but since the advent of the parcel post made it necessary he has been supplied with a cart, and, summer and winter, fair weather and foul, his shrill whistle brings us to our doors to take from him our slender mails. One or two of us take *The Scotsman*, and most of us the local paper. An occasional letter from our sons in Glasgow or Newcastle, or from our girls in service throughout the countryside, he hands to us and passes on down the long street with a friendly word to one and another. On our rare journeys to town or to the seaside it is "postie" who gives us a lift in his cart—either postie or one of the many carriers who daily pass our doors.

The carrier, or "cadger," deserves a word to himself. Once his cart and slow-moving heavy horse were a feature on our country roads, but this class of vehicle has for the most part disappeared

in our district and its place has been taken by the smart tradesman's spring cart from Kelso or Jedburgh or Yetholm; soon, no doubt, these in their turn will give way to the ubiquitous motor, and then good-bye to the rustic quiet of the old braeside.

But meanwhile the carriers and their carts are our friends. All our supplies arrive by them, and they do a deal of shopping for us as well in a quiet way, besides, as I have said, giving us a lift when occasion requires it. They supply the gossip of the district. Long after we have given our orders and bought our modest supply of groceries one may see them "crackin'" with the old wives and jesting with the men returning from their work at six o'clock. It is they who bring the news of this farm and the other, which they have passed in their morning's drive; of the illness of the "herd" at Crosslaws, or the burning of the stacks at Bughtrig. We know them in the far distance each from each by the driver's figure or the horse's gait, and watch them coming down the long brae as our fathers watched their predecessors half a century ago. They travel late, these kings of the roads. You may see their yellow lamps flashing through the mirk of a winter evening long after all other traffic of the road has stopped. In the herring season the carts come up

from Eyemouth and Berwick laden with the shining spoils of the deep, and the musical cry of old "Herrin' Jock" rings across the quiet fields; after he has passed you can see a string of herrings hanging at nearly every doorway in the hamlet.

Our population, save for the births and deaths and marriages made into other districts, changes but little. Sometimes, certainly, some broad-shouldered son of the clachan goes out into the world to throw off the trammels of his provincialism and return later with a dress and gait and speech that is strange to the braeside; but as a rule we take up the plane and the hammer, the spade and the graip, where our fathers, grown old and tired and grey, have laid them down. Morning after morning we greet the same neighbours across the street as we come out to whiten our worn doorsteps, night after night we bid a "gude e'en!" to the same as the smiddy fire dies out and the "glims are dowsed" in the windows. We are out of the line of tourists, and we have no abbey ruins or places of interest in the immediate vicinity; nothing but the all-pervading native romance that lies upon the Border country like a cloth of gold. The few visitors that come and stay with us are with us but not of us, and a strange face passing down the street is noted by us all.

So we watch the corn ripen and the stacks go up
and the yellow stubbles grow brown behind the
plough, playing and loving, wedding and working
and dying, caring as little for the outside world as the
great world cares for us.

THE MAKING OF A STOCKMAN

“They pass, these merry children, up the hill path through
the heather,

Barefooted and brave-hearted on the road their fathers trod,
With gay young voices lifted and with glad hands linked
together—

The strength of Scotland's future in the charge of Scotland's
God.”

The Cottage.

It is pretty generally conceded by American farmers that no man surpasses the Scot as a stockman. Whether the work lies among cattle, sheep or horses, a natural ability to deal with and care for these animals seems to belong by hereditary right to the man of Scottish descent; the farm labourer of that wonderful North Land, of which the farm methods are imitated wherever soil is tilled, and from which cattle, sheep and horses are bought at almost prohibitive prices to strengthen and renew the live stock of the world.

The Scottish farm hand by birth and environment has developed some sterling characteristics that are admittedly lacking in the hired labourers of other lands. He is, as a rule, honest, steady and reliable. He is thrifty, with an eye to his own advantage,

while never neglecting the best interests of his employer. He is civil and obliging; he was compelled to be so in his younger days, and now is so from motives of pride and self-respect. He is patient and kind to the animals put under his charge; and this, too, is the result of his early training.

It will be interesting to American readers to cross in fancy the grey Atlantic and see the Scottish farm boy in his home in the shadow of the hills, among the surroundings that have made him what he is—the finest handler of live stock in the world.

Everyone knows something of the rugged line that bred him—of the broad-shouldered, strong-armed father stepping slowly down the long straight furrows behind his creeping plough; of the rosy-faced, full-breasted woman—his “mither”—in the intervals of house and field work toiling so bravely with tired, cramped fingers at his “mending” that he may go to school no less “braw” and neat than his neighbours. It is a royal stock, and by all the canons of breeding he could never be other than he is—a strong, capable and healthy man. The clean country air has built him up morally and physically to the sturdy type of manhood best adapted to the battle of the working world.

The Scottish ploughman is seldom anything else than poor, but his is a poverty that is self-respecting and content. For many centuries his forefathers have worked for a scanty wage in the fields of more fortunate men, accepting the menial's position and the menial's pay from generation to generation without question. To his practically unskilled labour only one possible advancement is open—the position of farm steward, or “grieve” as it is called; and this position presents but few vacancies, its healthy surroundings generally allowing those who fill it to grow grey in its service.

Some of the young countrymen, it is true, drift into the towns and become prosperous in trade; some join the police force, and some enlist in the army, seduced by the glitter of pipe-clay and lace and the music of the band; but as a rule their innate love of Nature and of animal life keeps them in the open fields. There are some, as we know, more ambitious and daring than their comrades, who brave the unknown waters to take up the responsibilities of other lands, and these men need no recommendation of mine, for the sterling worth of them is common knowledge in the Colonies and the States. But as a rule the ploughman born remains a ploughman, walking faithfully in the furrows of his fathers till death leaves the

Clyde team idle in their stalls and sends the sad little funeral cortège winding up the long hill to the village and the last deep sleep.

Though the ploughman is poor as measured by the standards of worldly wealth, his cottage is homely and comfortable, his little garden is bright with flowers, his potatoes and onions grow as luxuriously as the laird's, and his pig fattens in the stone-built pen. Farm wages are small but they are regularly paid—a part of them in farm produce—and the Scottish labourer can keep his family around him and be reasonably sure that the farmer will find employment for them all. And in this atmosphere of dependent independence is our future stockman born and reared.

No child could embark upon the stormy sea of life under calmer, healthier or more humble auspices. If he be a “simmer bairn” he looks out from the sheltering folds of his mother's tartan shawl upon a world of rarest beauty. June it may be, and the green world laughs in tender sympathy with him; the tall docken and the waving hemlock nod to him in friendly greeting as his mother, with baby in one arm and milk-pail on the other, goes singing through the pasture when the dew is on the grass. September, perhaps; and he stares open-eyed at

the noisy reaping-machine and the great white-faced horses as they swing by so close to him that he shrinks back into the folds of his shawl and nestles against the sheltering arm.

Like the calves and the foals he grows quickly, and a couple of seasons later he is riding in front of his father on the big plough horses as they come home from the fields in the summer evenings, jingling their looped chains and splashing through the brown pond-weed for their evening drink.

It is here and now that he learns those lessons of kindness that will stay with him for all his days. He knows that his father loves the big brown team better than anything on earth except the "wumman" and the "bairn." He has never seen them knocked about or ill-treated, and he comes to look upon them as a couple of great overgrown pets that must always be soothed and softly spoken. Deeper than you would think this lesson goes home to his heart; and so it is that, change his position and environment as you will, our stockman seldom or never ill-uses his charges.

Then comes a year of irresponsible toddling about, sometimes in the hand of an elder brother or sister, sometimes with a companion of years as tender as his own. These are the days of great journeys and

explorations. The farm buildings are examined in every corner; the stable, the barn, the stackyard, the turnip-sheds are all looked into with wide, wondering eyes. Staggering footsteps follow the cow-paths down to the rippling stream that bounds the pasture, to the wondrous kingdom of the burn with its swift brown minnows and awesome ugly frogs.

Then comes school and the first tightening of the chains of discipline, the oppression of the clean white collar and the face too-frequently washed. But if school brings restraint and irksome responsibility it also opens new avenues of delight. Long walks through dewy mornings when the hawthorn hedges on either side of the road to the village are full of the chirp of birds; through frosty mornings when the leafless boughs are hung with diamonds and the children make slides upon the frosty water-pools in the wheel-tracks; games of marbles at the noon interval, and dinners taken at the village pump with a score of merry comrades. All these things make up for the droning lesson hour and an occasional stroke of the "taws" that recalls the wandering mind from its journey with bird and bee.

How much do these children owe to the wise rule of the village dominie! Here at the little ivy-

covered schoolhouse are inculcated the first principles of obedience, of honour, of proper respect for authority, and of much more that goes to make up the vigour and industry and intelligence of the Scottish stockman. Ah, village dominie! How small is your reward for your infinite patience and your long, long hours spent in the making of men! Seldom is your name known beyond the borders of your parish, or your face seen beyond the last house in the "clachan," but your influence has gone farther than you know or dream. Sometimes across the broad Atlantic the stockman of whom we are now writing may look back through the mist of many years to the kindly face at the desk, and the trembling old hand so reluctant to touch the bell that should shorten the playground hour! Good old dominie! When those bright-faced, rosy-cheeked urchins of yours have come to their life's work in a sober middle age you may lie down to sleep under the rowan trees in the kirkyard on the hill, unhonoured and unsung, but conscious of a noble work that God knows was nobly done!

It is in the village school that the relation of servant to master is made plain, if such a lesson has been neglected in the home. But the farm children have a natural inborn courtesy that does

not appear in the city-bred child of similar class. When the laird rides by upon his horse, or the farmer's daughters pass in their pony-carriage, the girls make low curtseys with infinite grace, and the boys are not ashamed to show the respect that position demands by lifting their caps. It is the gentle courtesy of the peasant—the foundation of the good manners of our stockmen to-day.

In the holidays the boy seizes every opportunity of gaining the experience which is to fit him for his life's work. At the same time he has no dreams of Canada or the States, and has never even heard of such places. If he thinks at all of his future employment he has doubtless planned for himself the daily round that his father takes. But he loves the animals for their own sake. He loves to climb upon the gate of the cattle-shed and sit watching the red steers licking up their oil cake; he likes to watch the shepherd shearing sheep, and to catch the big ewes for him as he needs them; but above all he loves putting the harness on the Clydes, struggling with the tall collars and heavy chains with the same grit and determination that is going to make him sought after in the labour markets of the world.

Holiday-time is, as it happens, harvest-time, and the boy is everywhere, sometimes helping and some-

times hindering, sometimes inordinately busy and sometimes frankly lazy, but always enjoying himself immensely. He carries water for the men and women in the fields, rolls up the cart ropes for the drivers, and chases rabbits for his own amusement. Then he lies down in the shade of a half-built barley stack and sleeps soundly with never a care to cross his dreams.

And the mischief that is alike the patrimony and the privilege of his youthful years! The stoning of the ducks upon the pond and the stealing of hen eggs from the nests, the climbing after pigeons in the rafters, the surreptitious smoking in the cart-shed—"they laddies" get the blame of it all, and generally with justice.

And all the time our stockman is in the making. Unknown to himself almost he is acquiring the humble culture of the village school and slowly learning the lessons of his life. Already he knows each part of plough and reaping-machine, each belt and buckle of the harness, each sign of health and sickness in the horses and the cows. He sits for hours on Sunday with men on the corn-bin in the stable and learns the lore of field and farm, of grain and live stock, and, loving it all, remembers these lessons better than any of the dominie's. This

is the real schooling of our stockman. The fathers particularly are the unconscious tutors of their sons, moulding their manners and ideas without ever giving the matter a thought. After them the boys follow, over stubble and heather and grass, thinking the "long, long thoughts" of boyhood to the creaking of the ploughs and the bleating of the young lambs as they shiver at the "bield." The fathers speak but seldom to them, the conversation being limited to a sharp "Coom oot o' thot, nae!" or "Haud awa' hame and fetch ma plaid," or whatever else the occasion demands. But the youngster obeys without question, for he knows that implicit obedience is the price of his coming, and sufficient is his reward if he is allowed to hold the plough handles at a head-rig, or to catch a ewe with the crook.

And all the time he is learning, learning, learning; not so much by questions as by careful watching of the methods of the men; learning how the ewe's feet are trimmed, how the sheep-nets are set, how the shares are hammered on the plough and the grain loads built upon the carts.

Soon, too soon, it is time to return to school again. There is another year or two of satchel-bearing through sun and mist and rain, a year or two of

“tig” and “bools” and “taws,” and then at fourteen years of age our young stockman is free—free from the bondage of books to enter the thralldom of the land. On the day that he lays down the satchel and primer he takes up the “graip” and the hoe, and goes out into the fields to prove his destiny. At this period of life—halfway between manhood and boyhood—he is known as a “halfin,” and under this somewhat contemptuous designation he takes up the heavy burden of a man’s work upon the pay of a child.

These are the heavy hours of his life of labour; physical weariness is often with him, and tired limbs keep tally of the long miles behind the harrows and the long rows of turnips standing endless to the hoe. There are heavy bags of grain to be lifted and loaded, heavy graipsful of manure to be flung—a man’s work to be overcome with the unset muscles of a boy. But with it all is the pride that comes of labour well fulfilled, and the first lessons of trust and responsibility are learned. He is proud of his strength as it grows and the gradual approach to his kingdom of manhood. Every month finds him able to complete his task with more ease, to deal with heavier weights, to rely more on his judgment in all matters relating to the work of the fields.

A little later he attains to his crowning triumph—the ownership of a team of horses. Up to this time he has only been allowed to drive one horse, some old, quiet, and possibly worn-out slave of the farm; but now he is formally entrusted with a fine pair of young horses to care for and to drive. Responsibility brings out the best in us all, and with the care of a team the “halfin” puts on his full manhood and takes his place among the older ploughmen with an equal wage. He joins the conclaves of the corn-bin and granary on equal terms, and courts the white-aproned maids of the farmhouse with an equal gallantry.

What is true of the ploughman’s son is also true of the byreman’s and the shepherd’s. It is in those first excursions into the realm of his father’s work that the boy’s mind is unconsciously directed to the line which, generally speaking, he is destined to follow. In the years between schooldays and manhood the shepherd’s son assists his father and the byreman’s boy works among the cattle, and it is then that they learn something of that industry and conscientious attention to duty which is to be the characteristic of their later lives.

Then comes the restless period, the year or two years when the fetters gall and the natural ambition

of lusty youth struggles with the quiescent spirit of an inherited serfdom. Dimly our stockman realises as he treads up and down the changeless furrow, or the beaten track to the sheepfolds, that he was made for brighter days; that somewhere out beyond the turnip brake and the high thorn hedges lies a wonderful world of beauty and movement and life that is hopelessly barred to him. Sometimes, realising that it is to him a barred pathway, the ploughman buries the rebel thought of it behind him in the brown mould that his ploughshare turns, and the shepherd hides it away beneath the purple mantle of the heather that he treads. But now and again it smoulders with an unusual and irresistible persistence, until at last it breaks out into the flame of open speech. "Aw've been thinkin' on this Canady," he will tell you in his slow broad Scotch; or to prove the advisability of emigration he will instance the "kizzen that ganged to Ameriky and is doin' gey weel ower yonder."

But the intentions of the Scottish countryman develop slowly and many months pass, and the oat stubbles have become green turnip-fields and the bare thorn hedges have flowered in white before he has definitely decided to throw in his lot with the exiles.

Of his life across the sea we know. Sometimes he rises from the ranks of labour to take a high position either in agricultural, commercial or political circles; sometimes he plods on, happy and contented, in the humble calling to which he was born; but always he is known and noted for the sterling, innate qualities that were bred in him among the scenes of his boyhood on the heather hillsides and in the corn-clad valleys of the fairest land on earth.

THE GULLS BEHIND THE PLOUGH

“It's oh ! to be done with sighing !
And oh ! to be free of care,
As the seabirds wheeling and flying
At the side of yon ploughman there !
And I would we could bury trouble
As deep in Time's furrow-fold,
As the ploughshares bury the stubble
In the breast of the broken mould !”

Ribbons of Brown.

WHEN I was very, very young—a bit laddie, in fact—I used to love more than anything else in life to toddle up and down beside the men who were ploughing. It seemed to me in those days a grand and desirable thing to grow up and drive two horses. I used to watch with wondering awe the great white-faced Clydesdales as they lifted their feathered feet with slow and faultless rhythm, leaning into their collars with generous persistence, as they faced the curve of the brae. I loved to hear the ring of the taut chains, the tap of the heavy swingle-bars, the whine of the share as it grated here and there over a stone, and the soft “slather” of the moist earth as it fell in a chocolate cascade over the mould-board; but

better than all I loved the squawk of the hungry grey gulls as they flew overhead in white clouds of clamour, rising and settling, and rising again as the fresh furrow lengthened behind us.

I knew where they lived in the spring and summer, my friends the sea-gulls, because once I had been taken up to look at the broad blue loch that lay in the bosom of the hills, wreathed round with purple heather, and I had been shown the island in this moorland mirror where they nested and fed their young, and I had seen them, thousands and thousands and grey thousands, wheeling over the blue water and crying into the wind.

We had bonnier birds by far in Scotland, and many with sweeter voices, but none of them carried with them the scent of the newly-turned earth and the salt of the sea winds as the gulls did—my gulls that followed the plough.

Perhaps it is always the first vivid scene impressed on a boy's mind that stays most clearly with him to the end. Whether that be true or not, when anyone names *Scotland*, at once memory holds up before me the same bright picture in the same frame of blue March sky—the big team drawing steadily, the old man stumbling between the handles of the plough, with one foot in the furrow and one foot on

the lea, and behind and above him the grey mist of the gulls.

What a team it was! and what a driver! "Co' way, Jean, lass! Co' way, wumman!" he would call, every word a caress, to the big bay mare that, if she was lazy at times, was only so that she might have excuse for hearing the voice she loved. Then Clyde would turn his proud head and bite at Jean's bridle, resentful because *he* hadn't been included in the tender words.

Then old Jimmy would look round and see me lagging behind. "Coom on, ma mannie. What ails 'ee? The burds'll be takin' 'ee for a bit wurrm and gobblin' 'ee up ef 'ee dinna look shairp!" But I knew better than that and waved my little whip at the white flock squawking overhead. If it had been the old turkey gobbler in the stack-yard I might not have been so brave. But the gulls were my friends, I had no fear of them.

Old Jimmy the ploughman is dead, gone over the last headland into the great Unfurrowed Lea. The white-faced bays are buried—with the youth of the boy that followed them so lovingly—somewhere down by the burn in the shelter of the hawthorn hedge, and new horses and new men tramp from headrig to headrig along the remembered lands; but

memory, whenever I hold out my hands to her, brings forward the fair old picture in its frame of blue, and when I listen very closely I can hear the grating of the ploughshare in the loam and the ceaseless chatter of the gulls as they circle overhead.

THE END

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